

227 e. 16.

# DISCOURSES

ON

## DIFFERENT SUBJECTS;

BY THE

REV. RICHARD POLWHELE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

THE SECOND EDITION.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

## TWO DISCOURSES

## AND AN ESSAY.

---

VOL. I.

---

London;

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND, AND C. DILLY,  
IN THE POULTRY.



TO THE most reverend  
Rev. Sir RICH. KAYE, Bart. LL. D.

DEAN OF LINCOLN, AND ARCHDEACON  
OF NOTTINGHAM.

REVEREND SIR,

THE following Discourses, being chiefly designed to elucidate the spirit of our holy religion, may justly presume to shelter themselves under your protection: for, who by his varied and extensive benevolence hath exemplified more clearly that Christianity is the religion of the heart, or exerted himself with greater warmth and fervency in promoting every *establishment* which springs from that source, than the Dean of Lincoln?

Encouraged by these reflexions (in addition to the very friendly sentiments you are pleased

to express towards me) I am led to flatter myself, that, whilst you condescend to take these Discourses under your patronage, you will consider them as the offering of one whose ambition in thus addressing you, proceeds from the pure motive of testifying to the world the esteem and veneration he feels for a character so amiably distinguished.

I am,

Reverend Sir,

Your most obliged and most  
obedient humble servant,

RICHARD POLWHELE.

KENTON,  
March, 1791.

---

## CONTENTS

### FIRST VOLUME.

---

#### DISCOURSE I.

##### ON CHRISTIAN SIMPLICITY.

MARK x. 5.

PAGE

*Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God, as a little child, he shall not enter therein*

1

#### DISCOURSE II.

##### ON CHRISTIAN SENSIBILITY.

Addressed to the Younger Clergy.

JAMES iii. 17.

*The wisdom, that is from above, is first pure; then gentle; easy to be entreated; full of mercy*

- 18

#### DISCOURSE III.

##### ON CHRISTIAN PRUDENCE.

I. CORINTH. xiv. 20.

*Howbeit in malice be ye Children, but in understanding be Men*

- 41

#### DISCOURSE IV.

##### ON THE UNPREMEDITATED DISCOURSES OF CHRIST.

MATT. x. 19.

*Take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak* - 62

DISCOURSE

## DISCOURSE V.

ON THE PASSION.

I. ST. PETER ii. 24.

PAGE

*By whose stripes ye were healed* - - - - 95

## DISCOURSE VI.

ON THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

ZEPHAN. ii. 11.

*The Lord will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship Him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the Heathen* - - - - 110

## DISCOURSE VII.

ON THE JEWS.

ST. LUKE xxi. 24.

*And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled* - - - - 126

## DISCOURSE VIII.

ON THE ARABS.

GENESIS xvi. 10, 11, 12,

*And the angel of the Lord said unto her: I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. Behold, thou shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael. And he will be a wild man: his hand will be against every man—and every man's hand against him* - - - - 145

## DISCOURSE IX.

ON THE DEATH OF FRIENDS.

Preached at the Funeral of a Young Woman at Kenton, April 7th, 1788.

MATT. ix. 18.

*My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live* - - - - 165

DISCOURSE

( vii )

## DISCOURSE X.

ON THE REUNION WITH OUR FRIENDS IN A FUTURE STATE.

I. THESSAL. iv. 13.

*For I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope* - - - 177

## DISCOURSE XI.

ON THE NATURE, DEGREE AND DURATION OF REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS IN A FUTURE STATE.

REVELAT. iv. 1.

*Come up hither, and I will shew thee the things which must be hereafter* - - - - 193

## DISCOURSE XII.

ON THE CHARACTER OF SHIMEI.

II. SAMUEL xvi. 5.

*And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, there came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera. He came forth, and cursed still as he came.* - - - - 211

## DISCOURSE XIII.

ON THE CHARACTER OF BARZILLAI.

II. SAM. xix. 32.

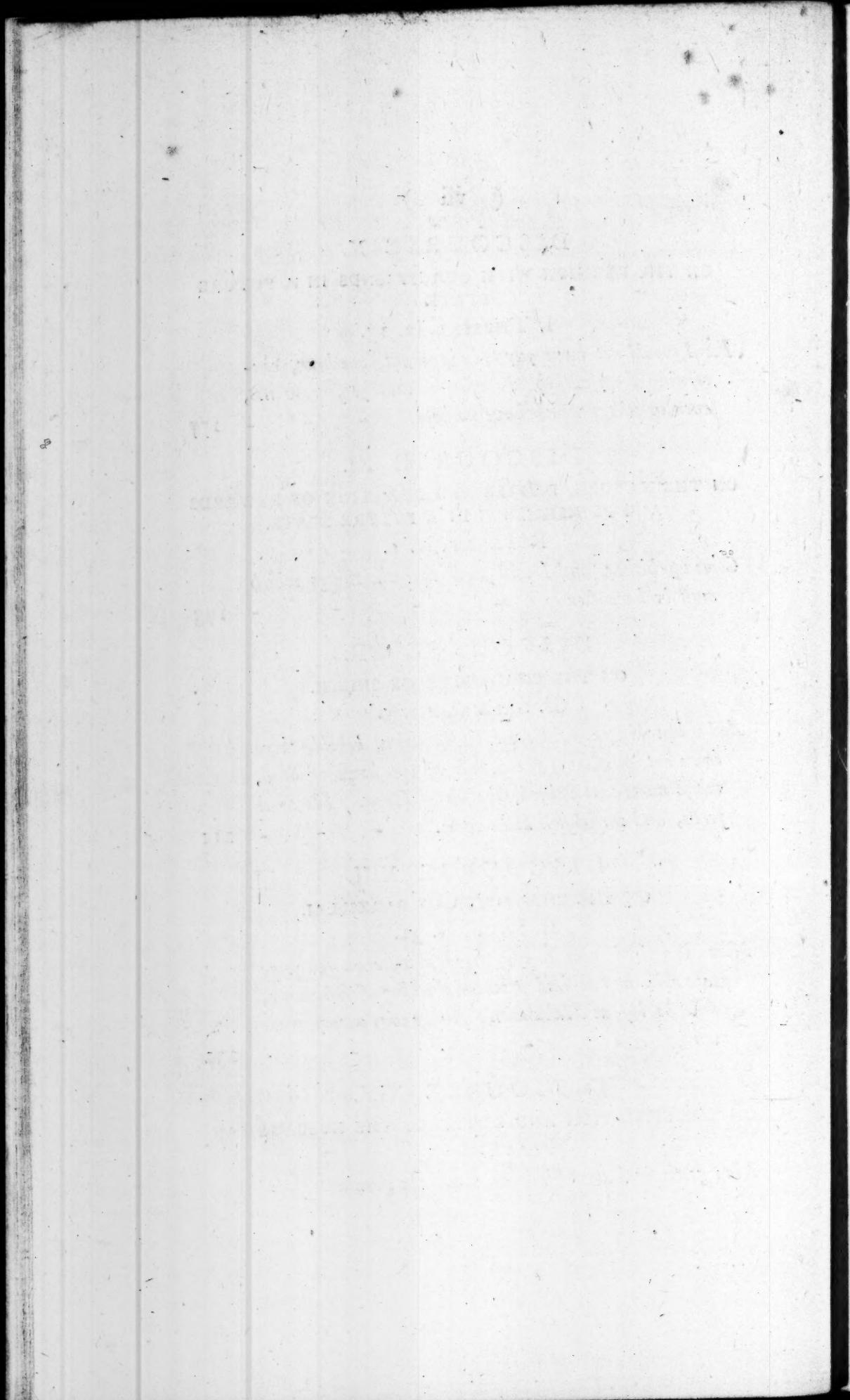
*Now Barzillai was a very aged man, even fourscore years old; and he had provided the king of sustenance, while he lay at Mahanaim: for he was a very great man* - - - - - 232

## DISCOURSE XIV.

ON THE SITUATION AND DUTIES OF THE HUSBANDMAN.

PSALM civ. 23.

*Man goeth forth unto his labor, until the evening* - 247



## DISCOURSE I.

MARK x. 15.

*Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God, as a little child, he shall not enter therein.*

**I**F we trace human life through its several stages, we shall observe the most striking discrimination in the periods of its progression and decline. The years of immaturity, opposed to its more advanced seasons, are very dissimilar in their aspect. The innocence and simplicity of the Child, may be forcibly contrasted with the guilt and cunning of the Man. To form such contrasts, is natural to the reflecting mind. Whilst we survey what passes immediately before us, we insensibly recur to former transactions, which memory only can supply. Hence the recollection of our earlier days may often furnish us with no contemptible instruction.

struction. In our comparison of the present with the past, we frequently fall into reflections of a moral tendency, that lead us in a certain degree to a knowledge of ourselves. He who, having long been conversant with the world, hath adopted many of its maxims, and yielded to many of its temptations, may look back on liberal sentiments once fostered but now coldly entertained ; on sensibilities that can no longer communicate delight ; on generous actions that have lost their power of pleasing ; and on virtues, once animated by the warmth of ingenuous youth, but now feebly supported, or, perhaps, no more. And he may remember, with what reluctance he admitted opinions, now his favourite tenets—with what horror he shrank from vices, that once appeared of a formidable aspect ; but which example soon stript of their terrors, on which fashion diffused a specious lustre, and which habit has, at length, familiarized to his mind. But the days of Childhood will present him with purer scenes, where guilt employs no racks to torture ; and seduction, no stratagems to betray.

Thus may he contemplate human nature at a crisis, when the heart is susceptible of impressions from every object.

Such

Such is the representation of his dawning day; on which he must reflect with pleasure, in the abstract. But when, returning to his present state, he reviews his conduct, examines his heart, and detects his errors, can he support the melancholy contrast of Childhood, artless, vacant, and innocent; and of Manhood, cunning and suspicious, enslaved to many a care, and corrupted by many a vice?

Yet is this descriptive of human nature, in general.

The diseases of the soul, unless remedies be seasonably and repeatedly applied, will "grow with our growth, and strengthen with our strength." Though the mind acquires vigor with added years, yet many circumstances concur, to prevent the due exercise of its powers. There exist a variety of causes that conspire to weaken or pervert them. If we inspect the mental constitution, we shall find it perpetually subject to commotions. There may we observe the more turbulent passions and appetites in rebellion against reason. And, there, in calmer moments, may we see even reason herself, clouded by doubt, distorted by prejudice, or inflated by pride. From a concurrence of out-

ward causes, the human conduct becomes still more complicated and perplexed. The objects of pleasure allure the senses, and the views of interest debase the sentiment; the first introductory of luxury, the second of dishonesty—in all their various forms! with all their train of evils! Sad proofs of human depravity, that should teach degenerate man to walk humbly with his God!

We learn, then, that the purity of our sentiment is corrupted by the contagion of the world—that, thus, our appetites grow violent and unruly, and our actions incongruous and perplexed. Yet so insinuating is vice; that these changes are almost insensibly effected. And it should alarm us to consider, that our conscience loses its vigilance by degrees; that we often approve designs of a questionable shape, and admit vices, that come varnished by deceit!

FROM these general observations we may collect, that our earlier years are exempted from those vices and cares which perpetually disturb the more advanced seasons of life. In proportion to this exemption, the mind enjoys its purity and freedom. And the pure and unembarrassed mind is  
best

best disposed for instruction. Such a disposition is the most happily adapted to the instructions of the Christian religion. He, who would partake of its blessings, must receive it with a temper like this. For "whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of "God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."

It hath been observed by a very benevolent writer, that the rude genius of a nation just emerging from barbarism, must be highly favourable to Christianity. The most striking features of infant society are plainness and artlessness of manners. They live in conformity to nature—for they have no desires but such as harmonize with her laws. Ignorant of artificial wants, they are free from the greater part of human evils: for the greater part of the evils of man are self-created—the creatures of our fancy, or the offspring of our vices.— "God made man upright; but he hath sought "out many inventions."

The beautiful description of the men of Laish,  
 " who dwelt after the manner of the Zidonians,  
 " quiet and secure—and there was no magistrate  
 " in the land that might put them to shame in  
 " any thing—and they were far from the Zido-  
 " nians, and had no business with any man"—  
 must

must suggest to us the most lively ideas of the innocence of an unrefined people. The manners of such a people have a more peculiar correspondence with the simplicity of the gospel. At that happy crisis, when their faculties were beginning to expand, and their ignorance of luxury was their best security from vice, the knowledge of Christ, it should seem, might have been disseminated with success.

It is the same, with the infant mind. There is an evident analogy between the periods of progressive society, and the different stages of human life. They are, alike, untainted at their dawn, and corrupt in their decline.

The result, therefore, of these observations is plainly this: "the character of our earlier days is most agreeable to that gospel, which exhibits to us a pure worship, and a pure morality."

He who framed this religion was aware of the many obstacles that would obstruct its progress. He knew the hardness of the heart that refused the impressions of the truth—the unsteadiness and cowardice of the mind that might embrace his doctrines for a season, but would soon yield to temptation, or be conquered by fear; and the

vain

vain pretensions of those, who wandered, though professors of the Gospel, through the mazes of an intricate world—distracted by the hurry of business, the deceitfulness of riches, and the allurements of pleasure. And he hath illustrated by a simple parable the inefficacy of his precepts, when applied to such prejudiced, irresolute, and dissipated minds. Yet, in opposition to these vain and unprofitable hearers, he hath represented at the close of the story, the character of him who received the word with truth and honesty, and brought forth the fruits of righteousness; while his conduct, coinciding with his knowledge, evinced the fervor of his faith, and the sincerity of his heart.

That we may direct our attention without difficulty to the cares of Heaven, our Lord repeatedly exhorts us to throw off, as far as possible, the incumbrances of earth. How forcible is the reproof : “ Martha ! Martha ! thou art careful “ about many things ; but there is one thing “ needful.” And—“ fear not, little flock, (says “ Christ) for it is your Father’s good pleasure to “ give you the kingdom.” “ Provide yourselves “ a treasure in the heavens, which faileth not ; “ where

“ where no thief approacheth ; neither moth cor-  
 “ rupteth.” Thus only can we resemble, in  
 heart, those little children who were invited to  
 “ come unto Christ—for of theirs was the kingdom  
 “ of Heaven.” With this idea, hath St. James  
 assured us, that pure religion and undefiled before  
 God and the Father, is to keep ourselves unspotted  
 from the world. And that benevolent “ disciple  
 “ whom Jesus loved,” addressing us with all the  
 tenderness of a father, hath warned us against the  
 lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the  
 pride of life.

These corresponding sentiments of Christ and  
 his followers, must argue the impossibility of our  
 receiving with advantage the word of God, whilst  
 involved in care and vanity.

And they were themselves most eminent ex-  
 amples of the character to which they bid us  
 aspire. “ Take my yoke upon you, and learn of  
 “ me, (says Christ) for I am meek and lowly in  
 “ heart.” Amidst every temptation, he was  
 innocent ; amidst every insult, humble. His  
 disciples approached his perfections as near as  
 human nature would admit. They proved, by  
 their simplicity, the sincerity of their preaching ;  
 by

by their consistent practice, the truth of the Gospel !

That Christianity was, in itself, a plain and unalluring system, may be inferred from the reception it met with, both among the Jews and the Heathen. The apostle of the Gentiles, though versed in all the learning of Greece, was not deluded by the theories of her sophists, or the fictions of her poets ; but, in language very different from the enticing words of men's wisdom, " he preached Christ crucified, to the Jews a " stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." The humble introduction of Christianity into the world, was despised and derided by the Jews, who expected in their promised Messiah, a temporal deliverer surrounded with all the appendages of princely grandeur. We need not wonder, then, at their rejection of that spiritual deliverer, who preferred a manger to a car of triumph, and poverty and lowness to riches and magnificence. The Greeks, accustomed to vain disputation, and " oppositions of science falsely so called," might have listened to the revelations of " the unknown God;" while the charms of novelty could conciliate attention. But this, perhaps, was all. Too simple

for the richness of exuberant imagination, and too humiliating for the pride of speculative reason, those holy oracles were received with ridicule and contempt. And thus the true religion was unsuccessfully opposed to the fables of a splendid mythology. If the glare of ostentation had marked its external appearance, or the sublimity of science its internal structure, Christianity might have alike attracted to its sphere, "the Jews who required a " sign, and the Greeks who sought after wisdom." They, who had indulged the notions of pomp and splendor, or who had pursued the phantoms of sophistry, were scarcely able to preclude from ambition its visionary hopes; or from science, its airy speculations.

Christianity was best adapted to the unaspiring and unsophisticated mind. " For you see your " calling, brethren—how that not many wise men, " after the flesh; not many mighty, not many no- " ble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish " things of the world, to confound the wise; and " God hath chosen the weak things of the world, " to confound the things that are mighty. And " base things of the world, and things that are de- " spised hath God chosen—yea, and things that " are

“ are not, to bring to nought the things that are—  
 “ that no flesh should glory in his presence.”  
 And the first converts to Christianity were, chiefly, among the poor in spirit, and the humble in station. Hence hath the apostle styled himself, “ The instructor of the foolish, and the teacher of babes.” The coincidence, therefore, of the gospel, with the simple and unambitious heart, is evident from this survey of its principles and success.

Let us, then, recollect the instruction we have derived from the text, and apply it to ourselves. In the comparison of the child with the man, we have considered the former as free from vice and care; the latter, as involved in both. Hence have we inferred, that the disposition of the first, is most friendly to the Christian religion. And this hath been illustrated by a view of unpolished society, as analogous to the infant mind. It hath been enforced by the precepts of Christ and his apostles, and confirmed by their examples. And, what is a further argument, we have seen Christianity rejected by the wise of this world, and received by the simple.

IN the application of this subject to ourselves, we must necessarily conclude, that, to prepare our minds for Christianity and consequently to entitle ourselves to its blessings, we must imitate the manners of the Child.

He, whose imitation approaches nearest to so pure an original, is most worthy of Christ. Secure in the enjoyment of innocence thus happily transcribed, he will possess a spirit so subdued, that fortune may neither raise it into transports, nor sink it into despair. That Christian humility, which, presenting to his soul the image of his dependence on God, inspires him with gratitude for every kindness, and patience under every severity, can preserve his temper from violent emotions, amidst all the dispensations of Providence. In prosperity, he will remember the true use of affluence and of power. Hence, nothing will be perverted, in his hands, from its original intention. And, hence, it will be his, to reconcile the distinctions of superior rank with the simplicity of the Gospel; while he shews, by a happy conduct, how possible it is, to be "splendid" "without pride, and liberal without ostentation." In adversity, his mean opinion of his own merit will preclude

preclude all cause for complaint. Afflicted by the bitterest calamities, he exhibits a bright example of Christian resignation. Conscious of integrity, and animated by faith, he looks forward, with an humble confidence, to that happiness which is the ultimate end of all the hopes of man. The image of the next world, indeed, will never disappear from his view; whether good or evil be allotted to him in this. The mind, which is properly detached from the scenes of earth, will always enjoy the prospects of Heaven.

But, alas! if we look into the walks of man, where, through the prevalence of iniquity, "the "love of many waxeth cold," few characters will strike us, to warrant a description though not visionary yet seldom justified by common observation. Actuated by pride, or ambition, or hypocrisy, the sons of "Adam have filled the earth with violence. Their imaginations are only "evil, continually."

In the midst of this wicked world, let us struggle with the flesh. Let us arm ourselves against the enemies of Christ. —

But occasional retirement is necessary to the preservation of our innocence; or the detection of

our

our vices. 'Tis only, in seclusion, that we can properly commune with our hearts. For this self-communion, let us frequently withdraw into our closets, and be still. Thence we may survey the world, at distance; and behold, in their true dimensions, its cares and vexations, its follies and its sins. Thence shall we see the littleness of many an object, which, in the pursuit, our hopes might have swelled into importance; but which experience, damping all our ardor, might have reduced to its proper form, and valued at its true estimation. In that solitude, no tempter can inflame our vices; no flatterer can soothe our folly.

There, let the proud man reflect, that he is as weak, and as short-lived as the rest of his brethren—and that his distinctions are transitory, and subject to a thousand accidents, which may destroy them long before Death approaches, the common leveller of all. And let him feel himself disobedient and ungrateful; going wrong seven times a day; often proceeding against his own convictions; and always counteracting the intentions of his creator.

Let the ambitious man consider the principles on which he acts; and the consequence of his actions. If his demeanor hath been the source of animosities

animosities and dissentions ; if he hath pursued his object with unjustifiable views ; if his first wish hath been to gratify his love of power, instead of being useful to mankind ; if, in short, neither his principles nor the effects of his conduct will bear examination ; — let him renounce his favourite schemes that terminate in evil. No longer deluded by the meteor popularity, let him endeavour to regain the paths of rectitude, of honor, and of peace !

And let the hypocrite make an effort to protract the moments of reflection, though he shudder at an intercourse with his conscience and his God. At this solitary hour, he will easily recognize the lines that separate right and wrong ; and acknowledge those distinctions which his perverseness had obscured. Surveyed through their proper medium, his offences will strike him with remorse. Though he may have employed the most specious arguments to palliate his artifices and deceive the world, he cannot long deceive himself. Before the tribunal of conscience, his pretences, however plausible, will fail ; his eloquence, however persuasive, will sink into contemptible casuistry. He will now condemn that wisdom of the serpent, which was never united with the innocence of the dove.

dove. Should he compare the sentiments of his earlier life with his present opinions, he may possibly be persuaded, that his reason, then uncorrupted, could have determined aright; and that he now commits many an action, which he then would have despised. Should he look forward to that solemn crisis at which he must relinquish all his sublunary prospects he may imagine himself a poor expiring being, no longer ready to boast a serenity of mind he never felt, or a versatility that can avail him no more. Nor will he deck himself with honors that must prove his condemnation; whilst he appears, in his own eyes, the dupe of interest, at whose altar he had sacrificed his integrity!

These, then, are the characters most unfriendly to that inoffensive artlessness, recommended in the text. It was pride and ambition overthrew the fallen angels—It was hypocrisy characterized the grand deceiver of mankind.

Against sins, therefore, of so unamiable an aspect, let us guard, with all diligence, the avenues of our hearts.

To this end let us avoid those dissipated scenes, that flatter our weaknesses, and strengthen our evil inclinations.

inclinations. Let us, often, contemplate the years of our Childhood ; and endeavour to imitate its simplicity !

Thus may Christianity become the ray, to enliven our reason, and the principle, to purify our conduct ! And, thus, when we arrive at the verge of human life, may we look serenely back on the paths we have trod, with love, with peace, with innocence ; and pass, by an almost imperceptible transition, into the regions where those virtues shall flourish for ever !

---

## DISCOURSE II.

---

JAMES iii. 17.

*The Wisdom, that is from above, is first pure; then gentle; easy to be entreated; full of mercy.*

THE purity of the wisdom that is from above hath already appeared on a comparison of the genius of Christianity with the innocence of Childhood. I shall proceed to consider its other characteristics—gentleness, placability, and mercy, in a survey of our religion as corresponding with the generous affections. And I shall occasionally advert to those vain speculations, which are contrary to the wisdom inculcated in the text; being formed after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

That our passions are as necessary to our moral and religious happiness, as our reason or understanding

standing, is a position resulting not only from the constitution of man and his connexions in society, but from the whole tenor of the Christian dispensation.

Yet there exists a species of stoicism not unlike the ancient, and a cold forbidding theology, whose characters so far assimilate as to exclude the passions from their respective systems. These, perhaps, amongst us, are, in some degree, the offspring of national phlegm ; or constitutional habit ; or an austerity induced by unsocial modes of life. Yet they are often found to originate in that speculative refinement, which, always unfriendly to the language of the heart, hath attempted to divest morality and religion of their true beauties ; exhibiting the form alone—the semblance without the spirit.

The pride of reason hath been more fatal, perhaps, in its effects, than the extravagance of passion. The former hath been frequently attended with scepticism or deism ; the latter by a precipitate desertion of virtue. The first steals into the heart by slow and secret methods, and gradually insinuates a poison which pollutes the fountain of the moral life. And when once it hath diffused its

virulence, there remains little prospect of a remedy: for he who hath lost his principles, can seldom recover them. But the impulse of passion may hurry the young man through a various career of excess; though virtue be still rooted in his heart. And often is he recalled from his errors into the paths of rectitude, by the instrumentality of those very passions, which first occasioned his deviation.

To this, however obvious, the preacher of the gospel but seldom directs his attention. Unacquainted with the life-springs of morality, he yet affects to reform mankind, by holding up to their view, a religion stript of sensibility. Conversant with the doctrinal and argumentative part of Christianity, to the exclusion of the pathetic, he addresses himself to the reason of his hearers alone, as if conviction were his only end. But man is a compound being, constituted of affections to be persuaded, as well as an understanding to be convinced: the one, a warm and lively principle; the other, frigid and inactive. To the first, therefore, as the source of action, let the preacher apply, if he would influence the conduct. Nature and religion have furnished him with the object and means

means of persuasion—the passions and the pathetic of scripture.

THE most fleeting prospect of the constitution of man and his connexions in society, will present to us the passions very sensibly co-operating to the ends of moral happiness.

Of that generosity, which is the most visible feature of youth, a certain measure is absolutely necessary to support our inherent sense of right and wrong. We perceive the rectitude or obliquity of an action, in proportion to the ingenuousness of our feelings. The “hasty conscience of the bosom,” that, unable to conceal its emotions, flies in blushes to the cheek; this amiable instinct is, in general, the criterion of virtue. And such is the constant companion of juvenile simplicity, as yet unperplexed by the rudiments of the world.

But it is not only in the youthful heart that these delightful propensities exist. Nature, however vitiated by the artifice of the manners, or oppressed by a mass of corruption, will burst, in some happy moment, the disguise, and shew its genuine sensibilities! The emotions of Saul, in the wilderness of Engedi, on finding that he owed his life to

David's

David's unmerited forbearance, at the very period he was thirsting after the blood of his benefactor, will prove there is a monitor resides within the bosom, whom neither envy nor ambition can absolutely destroy. Suddenly transfixed, as it were, with a sense of his iniquities, he exclaimed : " Is this thy voice, my son David ? " — " And he lift up his voice, and wept." Here flowed the full current of feeling ; and all was the triumph of nature. " Thou art more righteous than I," (said he, in the ardor of ingenuous acknowledgement) " for thou hast rewarded me good ; whereas I have rewarded thee evil." In that pathetic scene, where Elisha, with the spirit of prophecy, unveils to the view of Hazael the crimes he was hereafter to commit, we observe the force of nature, detached from all those adventitious circumstances, which too frequently disguise and palliate the outrages of humanity. " What, is thy servant a dog, (said he) " that he should do this great thing ? " 'Tis in the abstract that our vices are exhibited with truth. The transgression of David (had not Nathan involved it in a parable) would have appeared, perhaps, through the medium of self-love, of a very different complexion. In such instances as these,

these, the artifice of the world hath not time to operate. The heart is not at leisure to deceive itself; but the feelings irresistibly break forth, however vice or evil habits might have smothered or opprest them. The tyrant of Pheres, who had been inured to cruelty by the repeated murther of his subjects, could yet melt into tears, at a scene of theatrical distress. 'Twas from the same principle. The tender feelings are so intimately interwoven in the constitution of man, that the most inveterate vices cannot extinguish them. And they are so indissolubly connected with virtue, that, while their acuteness lasts, our morality, though it may be corrupted, yet cannot be annihilated.

The necessity of co-extending these propensities, so lovely in youth, with the more advanced periods of life, will be equally discoverable on a review of our social connexions. 'Twas the warmth of the benevolent affections, that originally created a coalition of interests. 'Tis this alone preserves in constant motion those reciprocal offices, on which the being of society depends. He, who, attempting the extirpation of his passions, hath reduced his conduct under the influence of reason, to the suppression of every sentiment that might endear

her

her precepts—of every motive that might animate his practice; must with difficulty prevent his prudence from degenerating into selfishness or avarice, his justice into scrupulous severity, his fortitude into stoical apathy and contempt of every object around him, and his temperance into a rigid abstemiousness. Unenlivened by the generous affections, his whole morality must concenter in a morose and mortified philosophy.

Since, therefore, the affections thus evidently contribute to the ends of moral happiness, it should follow that we must enjoy the pleasures of virtue, in proportion to the purity and genuineness of sensibility. If the passions give poignancy to our sorrows, they add vivacity and sweetnes to our joys. If we weep with those that weep; we rejoice with those that rejoice. Every species, indeed, of sympathy, is accompanied with delight. For 'tis grateful to a good heart to participate in the misfortunes, as well as share the felicities of others. The self-approbation we derive from a sense of generous actions, will, by inducing the frequent repetition of them, assimilate our nature to their amiable qualities; and thus tend to secure to us our simplicity. And the review of our conduct, which must

must often recur to memory, will furnish the mind with such a series of agreeable images, as (borrowing lustre from religion) will even diffuse a cheerfulness over the gloomiest scenes of life. Such a retrospect, in short, will inspire a consciousness, to common humanity pleasing; to keen sensibility most delightful.

While, then, it appears, from an inspection of human nature, that the passions are necessary to our moral happiness, it will be no less evident, on a view of Christianity, that they are equally connected with our religious interests; whether we consider the principles of its institution, the spirit of its laws, the subsidiary means which recommended them, the pathetic incidents in the life of their author, or the sanctions by which they are enforced.

In the great outline of the Christian institution, the compassion of God “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;” and the consequent sufferings of a Saviour, atoning for our sins; these circumstances at once discover to us the gentle aspect of our holy religion.

On a nearer approach to Christianity, we shall find the spirit of its laws to be precisely consonant

with our feelings ; while they inculcate our duty both to God and man, by the warmest appeal to the instinct of nature ! That sense of our dependence on him " by whom we live and move " and enjoy our being ;" and of the blessing we every hour experience, through his bountiful goodness—That sense which constitutes the humility and gratitude of the Christian, must, surely, breathe its happiest ardors from a bosom unspotted by the world. Merged in earthly cares and pleasures, the spirit that should diffuse itself in prayer and thanksgiving can maintain but a feeble intercourse with the Divinity, at those silent and solitary moments, when the good man approaches the throne of grace, to address his creator and preserver, his friend and his father. He knows, that from the heart alone can arise the incense of devotion. And is not this an intercourse of affection ?—Is not this a communion opened by a kind Mediator, unknown to the Jew or to the Heathen ? " For we come not unto the mount " that might be touched, and that burned with " fire ; nor unto blackness and darkness and tem- " pest ! But we are come unto Mount Sion, and " unto the city of the living God—the heavenly

Jerusalem :

“ Jerusalem : and to Jesus, the mediator of the  
“ new covenant ; and to the blood of sprinkling,  
“ that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”

The Platonist had veiled the Deity in a gloom impenetrable by the vulgar, though familiar to the philosophic eye ; and had given him a language incomunicable to common ears. 'Twas only refined wisdom that could presume to approach the sublimity of his throne. Yet Christian sensibility drew back the curtain, and disclosed the universal Parent, pitying the weaknesses, the ignorance of man ; and bending in mercy from the skies, to relieve and to protect his children ! The God of the Pagan was Terror—the God of the Christian is Love !

If a feeling heart be thus required amidst the retirement of our morning and evening sacrifice, it is much more necessarily connected with the devotional energies of a public assembly. There is an endearing sweetnes ; there is an elevated pleasure resulting from our devout association at the sanctuary. Our sacred sympathies are, perhaps, visibly diffused through the multitude of the people ; and the highest gratification arises from the united expressions of piety and love !

'Tis by an easy transition, we pass, hence, to a prospect of the social duties. To be tender-hearted, to be kindly-affectioned one towards another; on this depends our associated communion with our God, and this is the spirit of the Gospel. The law that enjoins the practice of charity, is the fullest confirmation of our benevolent propensities; while it points them to a height which nature could not intently survey; and proposes the Divinity himself, whose peculiar attribute is mercy, as the pattern of imitation. "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect." The most liberal and extended circle of unassisted humanity, could scarcely embrace a benevolence alive to the welfare of all, whether our friends or our enemies; patient of injuries; imploring Heaven to forgive the offender who strikes at our character, our property, or our life; lenient and gentle to the creatures around us; and even interested in the sensations of every animated being. Thus is charity the fulfilling of the law, and the noblest expansion of those feelings, which are the ornament of man.

If we call to memory the manner in which charity and the other Christian graces were recommended

commended to mankind ; if we recollect the circumstances of our Saviour's miracles, and the character of his discourses ; we shall be further confirmed in the idea, that our religion is the religion of the heart. We have hardly a miracle on record, that does not carry with it the gentlest commiseration for human sufferings ; that doth not operate to the relief of the wretched. We have scarcely a conversation, that doth not appeal to the passions or the fancy. "The author and "finisher of our faith" was, "in all things, made "like unto his brethren ;" and "was touched with "a feeling of our infirmities," that he might the more easily accommodate himself to our various situations. Hence, therefore, it may reasonably be inferred, that a knowledge of the human heart is a necessary qualification in those who undertake to instruct mankind. It was a knowledge, by which our Saviour (having as man acquired it by personal experience) directed all his actions, all his conversations, during his familiar intercourse with the world.

The sermon from the mount is a most beautiful address to the affections. It contains a simplicity and pathos, little according with the elaborate disquisitions

disquisitions of the modern preacher ; who seems to think himself superior to those feelings which our Saviour embraced, and to which our Saviour constantly appealed. But if he reflect on the story of the good Samaritan, and the affecting narrative of the prodigal son ; if he consider the other parables of our Lord—their matter, their manner, their intention—the audience they were designed to improve, and the effects they never failed to produce ; he must surely be convinced that their sentiment is drawn from nature and feeling ; that their form is the dress of fancy ; that their aim was to amend the heart by acting on the affections ; that the hearers were not more illiterate than the vulgar in general ; and that, in the natural course of things, this species of instruction proved highly salutary and useful. And, doubtless, an insight into nature and character is preferable to a familiarity with every language, or with all the inventions of science. Without such an intuition, we cannot adopt a mode of instruction corresponding with the circumstances of the persons we address ; and we shall often apply our remedies to the wrong place—to reason perhaps when the seat of the disorder is in passion,

or

or to the affections while the disease arises from a vitiated imagination.

But let us copy the models our divine master hath given us ; assured that his affecting manner (the only genuine eloquence) can most successfully penetrate the heart. And in the heart only reside those vital principles, with which religious happiness consists.

There is a diversity of incidents in the life of our Saviour which prove his address in awakening the feelings, which evince their loveliness, dignify their nature, and shew their connexion with Christianity. Even by a look he had the power of alarming the conscience ; of striking instantaneous conviction, and of producing the bitterest contrition. " The Lord turned, and looked upon " Peter." He commiserated the anguish of penitence, when the harlot washed his feet with her tears. And he knew the sympathies of friendship, while he wept with the sisters of Lazarus. The deceased Lazarus, indeed, he affectionately loved. And the whole scene of distress, with the miracle that followed, is a beautiful argument for human sensibilities ; their amiableness in the expression ; and the consonance of private friendships with the spirituality

spirituality of the Gospel. For, surely, the example of Christ (both in the present instance and that of the beloved disciple) may be admitted as a sufficient sanction for attachments of this nature; whatever may be insinuated of their incompatibility with the illimited expansions of charity; or of that fanciful necessity, by which private feelings are absorbed in the sensation of universal benevolence. Such casuistry must equally argue against all the "charities of father, son and brother"—that must suffer a proportional diminution as the heart dilates, or as the rays of affection diverge among mankind. Yet the Gospel no way militates against instinct; but (as we have abundantly proved) cherishes, refines, and exalts it.

To evince, therefore, that our religious happiness is closely interwoven with sensibility, we need not produce any additional incidents from the life of Christ; unless we advert for a moment to the scene, where, at their last solemn meeting, he bids farewell to his apostles, recommending to them the observance of the sacrament in this pathetic manner: " This is my body, which is " given for you—this do, in remembrance of " me." And, " This cup is the new testament of  
" my

“ my blood, which is shed for you.” “ Love one another as I loved you—for greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend.”

That a worthy participation of this blessed institution, must arise from a spirit of love and gratitude, will be instantly admitted. The liveliest emotions must warm the pious bosom at so affecting a commemoration of a Saviour devoted to persecution, and sacrificed for man.

He who coldly contemplates such passages in the life of Jesus, can have no real sense of piety, however he may pretend to the character of a philosophical believer. I do not hesitate, indeed, in asserting, that the man who discovers so insensible a heart, hath no right to be numbered among the disciples of Christ. If he hath barely assented to the authenticity of the gospels, after having examined every part with the eye of the critic; if he hath experienced no lively sentiment of grief or joy, of gratitude or love, on reviewing our Saviour's conduct among men, can he be said to have any interest in christianity? He certainly feels no interest, whether it be owing to constitutional coldness or artificial corruption. The sincere

christian will be deeply affected by every transaction, and every scene, where his divine master is brought forward to his view. And say, ye genuine believers, are ye at all times able to suppress the devout, though unphilosophical wish, that ye could have seen the Lord of Life; surveyed the benevolent lustre of his countenance; caught from his lips the glad tidings of immortality; frequented with him the desert, the village, or the city, where he performed his miracles, and resigned himself to his sufferings; sympathized with him in his agonies; attended him to his death upon the cross; conversed with him after his triumph over the grave; and joined the witnesses of his ascension, when he “ led them out as “ far as to Bethany, and lift up his hands and “ blessed them, and was parted from them, and “ carried into heaven?”

The wish, indeed, would be fruitless; yet often is it the spontaneous wish of every pious bosom: to indulge it to a passionate excess, would be absurd and enthusiastic; but to feel such a sentiment involuntarily arising in the heart, must be the source of the purest satisfaction to him who “ walks “ by faith, and not by sight;” who abstracting his mind

mind from the objects of sense that surround him, remembers, with the mixed emotions of regret and pleasure, those affectionate words which Christ himself addressed to his disciples :—“ Blessed are “ the eyes which see the things that ye see ; for I “ tell you, that many prophets and kings have “ desired to see those things which ye see, and “ have not seen them ; and to hear those things “ which ye hear, and have not heard them.”

Our religion, then, appears in every point responsive to the feelings, on which it builds also the sanctions of its laws. The principles of these may be offensive to the refined speculatist, who, boasting his disinterested admiration of the inherent beauties of virtue, pursues a form, embodied only by his fancy, and “ verily hath his reward” in the energies of the pursuit ! Yet the principles of these are no other than the hopes and fears which nature imparts to all her children. That longing after immortality, and that dread of futurity, we all so instinctively feel, hath christianity established in our bosoms—unveiling, amid promises and threatenings, an hereafter, to be by all or suffered or enjoyed. Happiness, the end and aim of our being, is held forth to us as the incentive to perse-

vering obedience: even its unlimited enjoyment is proposed to us as a reward to crown the christian warfare. Yet our fears, as well as hopes, are the motives of action; and, for the former, is everlasting misery denounced as the punishment of sin. Such are the sanctions of the gospel—those instruments that deeply strike persuasion, when wielded by the true soldiers of Christ. “For, by “the mercies and by the terrors of the Lord, “are we ordained to persuade men.” Hither then (the disobedient trembling at the spectacle) let the benevolent christian resort for comfort and for joy. Though but rarely represented from the pulpit, 'tis a spectacle the sacred writings have often shewn us in the sermons of Christ and his apostles. Thus, virtually, is arraigned the conduct of human vanity, that, addressing itself to philosophy alone, would offer arguments to reason, instead of incentives to passion.

From that tribunal, where the righteous judge shall render to every man according to his works, shall our affections be recognised and addressed: to those actions which result from feeling, will our Lord appeal, as the standard of our christian duty.

By

By these, the criterion of our obedience, will he acquit or condemn us.

The whole structure, therefore, of christianity throughout consistent, is evidently founded in the heart: hence our religious, as well as moral happiness, seems necessarily connected with sensibility.

These are mortifying conclusions to that pride of philosophy, which, formed after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ, is often seen to terminate in total infidelity: and he who excludes from his heart the enlivening rays of revelation, can retain but a faint glimmering of those benevolent affections which constitute our social felicity. Though he may pass through life with seeming ease and coolness, yet 'tis, in general, a mere affected serenity—a masque to hide his internal disquietude. The trying hour of death will detect his hypocrisy.

If, in the exhibition of one singular character, we are directed to the survey of deism, attended by virtue, and to the contemplation of its triumphs, in the very midst of death, we must naturally consider that deism as originating in a most uncommon insensibility; since it could derive but little comfort from its amiable companion, to

whom

whom it denied even the power of extending beyond a few languid moments, the hopes of existence; and to whom it represented a future state, as an airy nothing, and the world of spirits, as the region of chimera. I have thought proper to allude more particularly to the conduct of this pretended Philosopher, as there never, perhaps, appeared since the days of the gospel, a character more obnoxious to society. He was a man whose specious arguments shook the faith of superficial minds, while his fair show of morality imposed on the more discerning. But if we reflect on the obviously pernicious tendency of his posthumous works, we may be justified, perhaps, in concluding, that his virtue was as visionary as his theoretical tenets: for it can scarcely be imagined, that he who was possessed of moral principles, should attempt, by every method, to insinuate such notions into the mind, as he knew must necessarily corrupt it; or frame a system into which the wildest hypotheses are admitted; in which nature becomes a chaos, and which militates against all that is good and virtuous.—There seems an affinity between an unbelieving and unfeeling heart. To see his closest connexions broken, to be renewed no more—to consider

consider his most valuable friends as dropping into the gulf of annihilation—and to reconcile himself to such incidents, must, indeed, originate in a horrid tranquility. But let us turn from so uncomfortable a prospect—not only resolved to avoid the coldness of scepticism, but to beware of that religious indifference which too frequently obtains among those who profess themselves Christians—an indifference in some measure chargeable to that other enemy of the feelings, the fashionable insipidity of preaching.

No longer, however, to insist on a topic, to which I have so frequently alluded, let me again refer you to the true sources of animated exhortation, even to the holy originals themselves, which ever inspire the sincere and humble mind with their own genuine ardor, with the spirit of unaffected religion. There shall we discover the congeniality of instinct with the wisdom from above, which shall teach us to value as we ought, that youthful simplicity, so eminently exemplified in the conversation, the charity, the spirit, the faith, the purity of the amiable Timothy.

Hence shall “our hearts burn within us” at those delightful lessons, which immediately operating on our passions, will guide us in our endeavour to

direct

direct' the more turbulent and unpromising into the channel of the virtues. If ambition rise in our bosoms, these lessons point its ardor to objects worth our acquisition—on earth, “to pre-eminence “ in spiritual gifts”—in heaven, “to a crown of “ righteousness.” If resentment move us, they admonish us to turn it against sin, “to look round” on the obdurate “with anger,” yet “grieved for the “ hardness of their hearts.” If hatred, “to hate “ the enemies of our Lord. If avarice, “to seek “ after those treasures which neither moth nor rust “ can corrupt.”

Thus the most unpleasing propensities may become the instruments of our good; and our amiable affections, our joy, our grief, our love, our hope, shall grow more pure and more attractive, as drawing near to the beauty of holiness, they catch the breath of inspiration! Hence shall “our rejoicing be more abundant, and our sorrow “ shall be turned into joy.” Thus “shall gladness “ visit our habitation of righteousness and thus shall “we find comfort after the years that we have suffered adversity;” and hence, “as the good soldiers of Christ, shall our breast-plate be love, and “our helmet the hope of salvation!”

DISCOURSE

---

## DISCOURSE III.

---

I. CORINTH. xiv. 20.

*Howbeit, in malice be ye Children, but in understanding be Men.*

CHRISTIANITY may justly be styled "the religion of the heart." It interests and cherishes the feelings. Yet it ever appeals to them, with the sobriety of wisdom; and preserves a rational and a dignified manner amidst all the simplicity of instinctive nature, and all the glow of the benevolent affections. While it teaches us to be harmless as doves, it instructs us also to be wise as serpents. While it exhorts us to be Children in malice, it admonishes us to be Men in understanding. Equally remote from the apathy of the stoic, and the reveries of the visionary, it

G

hath

hath simplicity without folly, and pathos without enthusiasm.

To regulate his conduct according to the rules of the Gospel, is the end and aim of every Christian. But there is often a difficulty in determining the extent of those rules, and the mode of their application. Though the general precepts of morality contained in the Christian system are obviously intelligible to the rudest mind, there are many doctrines of an obscurer nature, which, apparently calculated for practical uses, have proved the source of the grossest absurdities and the wildest extravagancies. The religionist, attempting to form his conduct on their literal and unqualified import, hath too frequently exposed his profession to the ridicule of the Infidel, while he adopted a simplicity incompatible with the modes of society; or distinguished himself by an ardor of passion, which tinctured his opinions and his actions with false refinement, enthusiasm, or intemperate zeal. Through either of these extremes, his distorted—his weakened judgement, his over-heated imagination, and violent affections, can little consist with that character of understanding recommended in the text. If he contend that

his

his demeanor is strictly conformable to the Gospel rules, it may be answered that those rules have been misapprehended and misapplied. In order, however, to elucidate their genuine meaning, to ascertain their extent, and to fix their tendency, let us recur to occasions and circumstances. Those points in the conduct of Christ which coincide with the subject, will throw on it a clearer light than can possibly be drawn from general speculation. And we cannot pursue a more useful and pleasing enquiry.

Let us first then illustrate, by the character of our Saviour, the harmony of simplicity and wisdom.

With respect to our attention to the things of this world, let us recall to memory that beautiful passage, in the sermon on the mount, which communicates instruction well deserving our most serious regard.

“ Take no thought for your life, what ye shall “ eat or what ye shall drink :—Behold the fowls “ of the air : they sow not, neither do they reap, “ nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father “ feedeth them—Are ye not much better than “ they ? And why take ye thought for raiment ?

" Consider the lillies of the field, how they grow.  
 " They toil not, neither do they spin. And yet  
 " even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed  
 " like one of these. Seek ye first, therefore, the  
 " kingdom of God ; and all these things shall be  
 " added unto you." We are all obliged, as  
 Christians, to transcribe this advice into practice.  
 Yet we are not to imagine that an attention to the  
 things of this life is absolutely forbidden. Our  
 Saviour remonstrates only against such an anxiety  
 about our temporal concerns, as might detach our  
 thoughts from our eternal interests. Had the  
 original words been translated (as they ought to  
 have been)—" Be not *solicitous* for your life, &c." all  
 possibility of a mistake would have been pre-  
 cluded. But our Lord subjoins : " Seek ye *first*  
 " the kingdom of God"—Consequently, we may  
 seek, in the *second* place, " all those things, which  
 (to bless our honest exertions) " shall be added  
 " unto us."

It is evident, then, that some degree of foresight,  
 in regard to our temporal circumstances, is per-  
 fectly accordant with the simplicity of a Christian  
 conversation. And that such a species of prudence  
 is

is requisite, in our general conduct, as carries with it a respect for the modes of the people among whom we live ; and a certain accommodation of our manners to those of the world, may perhaps be collected from a few incidents in the life of Christ himself.

All the conversations of our Saviour with his disciples and others are replete with allusions to the transactions of familiar life. From this source the subjects of his parables are drawn, and almost every illustration of the doctrines he preached. In his discourses, which have a uniform tendency to direct our prospects to another world, there are interwoven various hints that should lead us to a prudential conduct in the present.

The remarkable passage where his disciples are accused by the Pharisees of a breach of the sabbath, involves a very obvious lesson against a too scrupulous adherence to precepts, which, having no foundation in eternal and immutable morality, may be properly dispensed with on certain occasions : yet they are only to be accommodated to the circumstances that may arise, under the direction of such prudence as consists with an honest heart. On our Saviour's vindication of his disciples, in

the

the present instance, this is, doubtless, the most natural comment.

That Jesus, in his commerce with the world, exhibited no marks of an ostentatious singularity, or a mortified moroseness, will instantly appear on the most transient review of his general deportment. In his public and private intercourse with men, we see examples of a prudent accommodation—yet never marked by a single trait of meanness or servility. Those who have attentively read the scriptures have perhaps already called to mind the instances to which I have alluded. They may have recollect ed, among others, the circumstance of the tribute-money demanded of our Saviour. It is thus simply and pleasingly related.

“ And when they were come to Capernaum, they  
 “ that received tribute-money, came to Peter, and  
 “ said, Doth not your master pay tribute?—He  
 “ faith, Yes. And when he was come into the  
 “ house, Jesus prevented him, saying—“ What  
 “ thinkest thou, Simon?—Of whom do the kings  
 “ of the earth take custom or tribute? Of their  
 “ own children or of strangers.” Peter faith unto  
 “ him—Of strangers. Jesus faith unto him—  
 “ Then are the children free. Notwithstanding  
 “ left

“ lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea,  
“ and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first  
“ cometh up—And when thou hast opened his  
“ mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that  
“ take and give unto them for me and thee.”

We here perceive, that our Lord even preferred working a miracle to the risk of offending the collectors of the public tribute. And though “ he regarded not the persons of men,” we may remark that he avoided all occasions of offence. Against the sinner, indeed, and the hypocritical Pharisee in particular, he often expresses himself with a noble liberty of reproof, with the abruptness of indignant reprobation. And he rebuked with an authority which even his enemies acknowledged; and not as the scribes, or the vain pretenders to righteousness. In our Lord we find none of that affected holiness, which characterizes those, who inflated with spiritual pride, exact homage from all around them, offend by a superficial demeanor, amidst their fancied humility, and even would claim an exemption from the more innocent customs and fashions of the world. He condescended to mix, in social intercourse, with publicans and sinners. As all, indeed, he did,

did, was in subservience to the great end of his mission,—the reformation of the heart ; it was from this motive he associated with the profane. His precepts, he knew, might more easily correct their vices when introduced under the aspect of friendly converse, than in the stile of public exhortation or instruction, which must have required a distant air—an awful and a dignified manner. But from this particular in the conduct of Christ we may deduce an inference more immediately relating to ourselves. Since we are to imitate him in all points which are level to our powers of imitation, we may reasonably conclude, that we are not to go out of the world, in order to avoid the society of the vicious ; and that the life of the recluse who shuns the paths of men, and sullenly sequesters himself amidst the gloom of solitude and superstition, is by no means consonant with the spirit of the Christian religion. No—our religion requires an activity of virtue—It is a religion of public energies ! No—we must often converse with the vicious. The duties of life require it. There is an uncharitableness in shaking off the dust from our feet—in seeking an ark, to shelter ourselves, lest we should be destroyed with the

the guilty. There is a cowardice in flying from the corruptions of the world around us, lest our virtue should be contaminated. Virtue that will not bear the trial of temptation, deserves not so elevated a name. In our conversation with men, let us endeavour, by our good example and salutary precepts, to admonish the sinner, and recall him from the error of his ways.

Yet must our advice be administered with caution and address. Many there are whose superior learning and piety and dignity of character might well enable them to advise with success, could they add to a knowledge of the human heart, a vigilance in watching the opportunities of persuasion, and a ready activity in seizing them. How few, then, are sufficiently qualified for the arduous task of admonishing others, at the hour of more familiar intercourse ! But how many there are, who plainly evince by their obtruded counsels, that, though they may be children in malice, "they are not men in understanding !"

As to our instructing the licentious or the dissipated, Jesus hath himself given us a rule sufficient to direct our prudence. "Neither cast ye (says he) "your pearls before swine ; lest they trample

“ them under their feet ; and turn again and  
“ rend you.”

If we closely consider the manner in which our Saviour conveys his counsels, and the circumstances attending it, we shall often perceive a wonderful contrivance in the one, and felicity of concurrence in the other. Hence we may extract even rules of conduct, independently of the main instruction conveyed to us. The scene, where the woman, taken in adultery, was brought before Jesus, may furnish us with no unsatisfactory proof of the assertion. It is thus represented. “ Early in the morning, Jesus came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him ; and he sat down and taught them. And the scribes and pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they say unto him : Master, this woman was taken in adultery. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned : but what sayest thou ? This they said tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking, he lift up himself, and said

“ said to them : He that is without sin among  
 “ you, let him first cast a stone at her. (And  
 “ again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.)  
 “ And they who heard it, being convicted by their  
 “ own consciences, went out, one by one, begin-  
 “ ning at the eldest, even unto the last. And  
 “ Jesus was left alone—and the woman standing  
 “ in the midst. When Jesus had lift up himself,  
 “ and saw none but the woman, he said unto her :  
 “ Woman, where are those thine accusers ? Hath  
 “ no man condemned thee ? ” She said — No  
 “ man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her—Neither  
 “ do I condemn thee ; go, and sin no more.”

Through the whole of this transaction there is an admirable sagacity and address to be discovered in the conduct of Christ. If he had given the scribes and pharisees a direct answer to their question, he would have excited their resentment by so bold a declaration of his sentiments, in opposition to an express law of Moses ; and he would have furnished them with matter of accusation against himself. He not only avoids giving offence, but he consults his own security. And he had other ends in view, too important to be left unnoticed. He taught us a lesson of mercy. The

woman (if she possess an ingenuous heart) was probably reformed through his lenity and forbearance. And whilst we observe a general hint, that we are all sinful and imperfect creatures, we see the awakened consciences of her accusers surprised into an examination, which, had they been prepared for an attack, they would probably have avoided; and hurried to a sense and virtual confession of an unworthiness, which, having hitherto attempted to conceal from each other, and even from themselves, they had sheltered perhaps under some such specious and deceitful covering as self-love, ostentation, or vanity. A mirror was unexpectedly presented, in which they saw themselves, blushed, and departed.

Such are the more striking incidents and circumstances in the deportment of our Lord and Master—which may be referred to the principles of a character, combining simplicity and wisdom. Yet a few of his precepts and of his actions are neither the rules nor the models of our practice or our imitation, on account of the particularity or transcendency of their nature; though they are, in general, adapted both to our situations and capacities. If he commanded his disciples to resist

resist not evil—if he exhorted them to fly from the violence of the oppressor—and being persecuted in one city, to shelter themselves in another; if he enjoined them in the most unqualified terms, such an unresenting forbearance, amidst injuries and insults, as might seem, at first sight, to consist only with unfeelingness or timidity; it will appear on the slightest view of the circumstances attending those particular points of instruction, that they cannot possibly extend to us, in their full and literal application. The very same conduct, which would be laudable, on the ground of prudence, in an immediate disciple of Christ, might argue in us, a cowardly dereliction of duty, or a mean-spirited and timid condescension. In the infant state of Christianity, when the preachers of the Gospel were few, when their mission was so extensive as to include all nations, (at the same time that the prejudices of the Jewish and the Gentile world were virulently hostile to the religion they taught) their flight from one city to another, could by no means have been construed into a desertion of their trust. They might have fallen through the fury of a single persecution. And as that mission was to the world at large, they were compelled

elled by no motive whatever, to a residence among the declared enemies of the Gospel. To retreat was their duty. For their non-resistance amidst injuries and insults, they had no treasures, no possessions to defend: and their persons (otherwise than as the security of them was connected with their mission) were to be regarded as nothing: they had left all for Christ. They had even sacrificed their tenderest connexions.

The rules, therefore, they were required to observe are inapplicable to Christians of the present day. The difference of our circumstances is too obvious to be detailed. Amidst an established religion and a guarded property, it would be equally ruinous to ourselves and society, to fly from a persecution we should oppose, or to crouch under injuries we should repel, though not retaliate.

These, then, are the great outlines of wisdom, harmonizing with simplicity. I proceed to consider its consonance with the affections.

As the prudence inculcated in the text may be violated by the extreme of simplicity, so may it be infringed by the extreme of passion. Let us still pursue our plan. The life of Jesus will furnish us with reflexions appropriated to the subject.

When

When we observe in our Saviour the emotion of the passions, we almost invariably perceive their utility, while we see them operating on the conduct, and producing the most beneficial effects. He always manifests the propriety of his feelings by some correspondent act. If he compassionate the sick, he restores them to health. If he express his indignation against the buyers and sellers in the temple, he expels them from the holy place. If he look round with anger on the superstitious Pharisees, he heals (though on the sabbath) the withered hand, in defiance of their superstition. If he be moved with grief for Lazarus, he raises him from the dead. If, in his last moments on the cross, he survey his mother with a filial affection, he recommends her, at the same instant, to the care of the beloved disciple; consulting the mutual comfort of a parent and a friend.

Thus may we remark in our divine Guide, such a temperate exercise of the feelings, accompanied with acts of virtue and goodness, as gives not the slightest countenance to those who, pluming themselves on a refined sensibility, are often perhaps prevented from succouring a distressed object by an excess of the very emotions which should have

have impelled them to its relief. Even the particular attachments of Christ are attended with universal advantages. In consequence of his friendly intercourse with St. John (the writer of his private life) we are admitted to the knowledge of many an endearing incident in his more retired moments, which throws an amiable lustre over his character, immediately appeal to the heart, and add a delightful and interesting variety to the evangelic story. Such an example, then, can by no means sanction those romantic friendships which, neither founded in nature nor in reason, are too frequently the source of various evils. And there exists a species of attachment, which, by drawing off the mind from the point of rational pursuit, and habitually exercising the feelings on visionary subjects, hath an evident tendency to vitiate the affections, and counteract their end. The affections were bestowed on us for the noblest purposes of life. And when they become the handmaids of religion, and are clothed with the beauty of holiness, it is then we can best contemplate the energies of an active morality, and the dignity of a fervent devotion. But they have often an improper influence on a mind religiously disposed—  
either

either inspiring it with an over-heated enthusiasm, or a blind and bigoted superstition.

The enthusiast, however, can mark nothing in the character of Christ that is, any way, similar to his own. During his agony in the garden, from the foretaste of his death—at the moment of his sufferings on the cross—at the affecting interview with his disciples after his resurrection—and amidst the parting scene preceding his ascension, his expressions have such a dignified simplicity, and such a moderated pathos as the visionary never exhibited.

And it deserves to be noticed (by the way) that his disciples dispassionately laid down their lives, in attestation of facts, of which they were eyewitnesses, and which they could not possibly mistake;—not as enthusiasts, blinded with false zeal, in support of theoretical opinions. The discourses of Jesus are not conceived in the manner of the innovating disclaimer; nor do they betray any want of connexion or consistency, from an assemblage of sentiments which have passed, unreviewed by judgment, through the medium of fancy, Though they are directed, in general, to the heart, they do not inflame, or violently agitate the af-

fections. They breathe the spirit of love; yet they melt not with an enervating softness. They announce the punishment of sin in a tone that impresses awe through its authoritative firmness, that terrifies by an obscurity of allusion; but they never distract the soul by accumulating images of horror, and minutely painting the scenes of everlasting torment.

In the devotional part of religion, inculcated or exemplified in the Gospel, there is a form which ill accords with the rant of incoherent prayer; and a spirit that bears no resemblance to the flashes of an extemporaneous effusion. In every point of view, we see the heat of enthusiasm discouraged and represt.

Still less are the traces of intolerant zeal to be discovered in the evangelic history. The contracted spirit of bigotry was directly opposite to the expanded benevolence of Jesus, whose revelations were designed to spread abroad universal happiness. He drew no lines of invidious distinction between the Jew, the Samaritan, and the Gentile. The story of the good Samaritan represents to us (among other lessons of morality) the happy effects of a disposition superior to prejudice.

dice. The schism of mount Gerizim, which gave rise to the most violent animosities, was utterly discountenanced by our Saviour, who with a mind too enlarged to admit a close examination of religious dissensions or local partialities, directed the views of the contending parties to that period, when the places of worship, both in Samaria and Jerusalem, should no longer exist.

His reply to his disciples, James and John, when they intreated him to revenge the inhospitality of a Samaritan village, will furnish us with the clearest illustration of the subject. " And when his discipiles, James and John saw this, they said " Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come " down from Heaven, and consume them, even " as Elias did ? But he turned and rebuked " them, and said : Ye know not what manner of " spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not " come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

In his apostles and followers we might observe similar, though less expressive features of an enlarged and liberal mind. We might recur to them also for a further illustration of the other parts of the main subject before us. But to enter

into such a review would lead us beyond the limits of a discourse.

Yet it may be intimated (as a summary of our preceding discussions) that among all the preachers of the Gospel, St. Paul seems the most conspicuous example, of a simplicity of demeanor and an animated zeal, attempered by wisdom and learning.

From the period of his conversion, he appears to have concentrated within himself, the unaffected manner that speaks the genuine heart, and flows only from a consciousness of innocence; the easy accommodation and rapid transition of address which argues an intuitive knowledge of the human character in its multiform appearances; and an earnest and impassioned activity, which acknowledged the corrective power of reason, and the meliorating influence of a Christian benevolence.

Here, then, are comprehended the several parts of our subject.

The conclusions from the whole are obvious. We cannot but infer that our religion is no heavy burden, nor unsocial or morose profession, as too many would insinuate—that it is universally practicable, and equally the concern of all—that our reason was not given us to be depressed and stifled

by

by revelation, which, as it is often interpreted, can leave no room for the exertions of the understanding ; that our affections were not lighted up in our frame in order to be extinguished ; that they require, however, the chastising and directing influence of the judgement — and, in short, that Christianity, when clearly understood and duly applied to practice, will harmonize the jarring and discordant interests in the constitution of man, and suit his present condition to his future destination, while it reconciles reason with passion, and earth with Heaven.

## DISCOURSE

---

## DISCOURSE IV.

---

MATTHEW, x. 19.

*Take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.*

I Have selected this passage from our Saviour's charge to his twelve apostles, as conveying to us an idea of his own unpremeditated discourses, and of that divine wisdom which inspired them.

We should find on examining the Gospels, that almost all the conversations of Christ were incidental. This circumstance was so evident to his immediate hearers, that the Jews, whose prejudices determined them to resist the strongest proofs of his divine authority, appeared to regard him as an easy prey. From the seeming hastiness of his expressions, and apparent inconnexion of his doctrines,

trines, joined to a peculiar openness of disposition, a boldness of sentiment, and an unshrinking liberty of conversation, they hoped, as the scriptures intimate, "to entangle him in his talk." Perhaps no human being could execute with success the task of instructing mankind in every part of their duty, from unsuspected emergencies or circumstances of the moment. It may be doubted whether the wisdom of man could produce even a deliberate system of morality, entirely free from contradiction. In this line, the most elaborate works of mere human philosophers are always imperfect, if not inconsistent. The man, therefore, who freely descants on moral subjects, as occasions arise, can never be supposed to acquit himself without some casual mistakes. Though he never fail through inadvertency, yet the necessary obscurity of various points which may happen to fall under his notice, and which he discusses without the slightest premeditation, must sometimes involve him in error.

The manner of Socrates approaches the nearest to that of Christ. Nevertheless, the precepts of the Athenian were, in general, abstracted from the objects immediately passing before him. Had the

tenor

tenor of his morality been directed by momentary occurrences, had every subject been suggested by unforeseen events, we should probably have discovered in his Memorabilia no small number of absurdities ; admitting that these memoirs are a faithful transcript of his familiar discourses. But his precepts were evidently the result of laborious investigation—of long philosophical research. Nor are they given to the world as they were orally delivered. There is no doubt but his instructions were greatly modified by his memorialists ; and have a different appearance, as to stile and manner, and sometimes sentiment, according to the peculiarities in writing and thinking that characterised his too famous disciples.

Not so were the precepts of Christ either delivered or recorded.

To give a proper idea of this distinction, I shall consider the occasional promulgation of our Saviour's doctrines, the number and character of his audience, and the character and connexion of his historians.

From a view of his discourses as condensed into a perfect system, we shall be more clearly convinced of our Lord's divine authority.

To

To bring together the instances in which Jesus was led by the occasion to open the sources of instruction, would be to refer to almost every precept or remark that proceeded out of his mouth.

From the time that Jesus began to preach, he uttered occasional admonitions; applying events to moral uses the very instant they arose to observation, and accommodating his doctrines to the characters and situations of his hearers. To Peter and Andrew casting a net into the sea he said: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

In the sermon on the mount, he sometimes extracts hints of moral wisdom from the familiar appearances of nature; and communicates instruction, by unpremeditated allusions to what was striking to the senses. The fowls of the air to which he directed his hearers, were, perhaps, singing, as he spoke, amid the thickets of the mountain; and, probably, the lilies which he bade them consider, were scattered over the fields that lay in prospect.

It was not uncommon with our divine Teacher to illustrate his subject by popular stories, which, as they were fixed in the memory of his audience, were instantly seen in all their force and propriety of application. "The man, who built his house

“ upon a rock,” and the opposite character, who founded his dwelling “ upon the sands,” might be obvious enough to an allegorizing fancy, and easily applied to the cases in question. Yet, in this and many other similitudes, our Saviour had probably an eye to real incidents, that were known to the vulgar, and might be at once recollected.

The storm gave our blessed Lord occasion not only to work a miracle by stilling it, but to admonish his disciples of their want of faith, or a due confidence in God. And his walking on the sea introduced a similar admonition to the doubting Peter, whose character is displayed to us by an accumulation of trivial and familiar circumstances.

The proofs of our Saviour’s divine mission are brought forward in the clearest manner by his unstudied answers to the questions of others. When he was asked, “ Art thou he that should come, or “ do we look for another?”—“ Go and shew John “ (said he) what things ye hear and see. The “ blind receive their sight—the lame walk—the “ lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear—the dead “ are raised up—and the poor have the Gospel “ preached unto them.” The miracles, to which

he

he here refers, are placed upon a footing with his preaching the Gospel to the poor. The one had the same charitable aspect as the other. And so fully engaged was our Saviour by his benevolent feelings for mankind, that even here, where he is questioned respecting his own pretensions, he is hardly able to detach his miracles from the circumstances of charity which invest them, or survey them in the pure light of their divinity; though, to make out his proper claim to the character he assumed, it was natural to apply the glory of them to himself. An impostor would have given a very different answer—but our Saviour's reply was the spontaneous effusion of a more than human mind imprest with infinite benevolence and love, and too familiar with omnipotence to be struck by the greatness of a miracle, or elated by the wonders he performed among men. The stupendous appearance of a miraculous deed, as adding dignity to himself, would have been a more obvious idea to a mere human being, than the beautiful effects of it, as contributing to the happiness of others. On the former he would have enlarged; endeavouring to guard against the suspicion of imposture—the latter he would have left unnoticed.

But to proceed — When Jesus beheld the multitudes faint and weary, and sinking perhaps under the burthens they were obliged to bear, he immediately called to them, with a voice of delightful invitation : “ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden ; and I will give you rest ! Take my yoke upon you—and learn of me—For I am meek and lowly in heart—and ye shall find rest unto your souls : for my yoke is easy ; and my burthen is light !

When the Pharisees censured his disciples for plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath day, he took occasion to explain to them the true nature of the sabbath ; and to intimate, at the same time, his own superiority even to those on whom the Jewish law had conferred peculiar privileges.

When his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him, he instantly gave a new and beautiful turn to the doctrine of Christian obedience (which must result from a principle of love) as he stretched forth his hands towards his disciples and said : “ Behold my mother, and my brethren ! for whosoever shall do the will of my father which is in Heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother.”

“ mother.” And, to banish from his disciples those ambitious thoughts which began to rise in their bosoms, he as appositely and strongly enforced the doctrine of humility, by setting a little child in the midst of them, and observing: “Who-“ foever shall humble himself as this little child, the “ fame is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven.”

The fig-tree suddenly withering away at his command, not only attested his divine power, but introduced, in the most sensible manner, his observations on the vast efficacy of faith.

In the case of the woman who had seven husbands so treacherously proposed to our Saviour by the Sadducees, he instantly saw through their delusive design, exposed the fallaciousness of their question, and repelled them with disgrace.

I might comment in the same manner on almost all his admonitions or observations, point out the facility with which they were applied, and their peculiar force as connected with circumstances.

THE gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke exhibit to us but few incidents, in addition to those which I have noticed in St. Matthew, as introductory to our Saviour’s conversations.

In

In St. Luke we are particularly struck by the appearance of the captious lawyer, “ who stood “ up and tempted” our Lord. Pluming himself, no doubt, on the prospect of a glorious triumph over the embarrassed and disconcerted Teacher, he enquired with an air of insult: “ And who is my “ neighbour?”—But to his great disappointment, and to the gratification of every humble hearer, his enquiry gave rise to the most elegant of our Saviour’s parables. Were we to examine this parable with critical severity, as a work of time and labor, as a production polished by the nicest care, we should be unable to discover in it the slightest blemish. When we consider it, therefore, as an unpremeditated effusion, which it unquestionably was, we may well look on our Saviour with astonishment.

His advice, as to worldly care, or (if we attend to a different interpretation) his hints respecting temperance were drawn from him by Martha’s solicitous attention; and his caution against covetousness, together with the corresponding parable, were occasioned by an ill-judged reference to his opinion, on the subject of a disputed inheritance.

The

The sudden destruction of eighteen persons by the fall of a tower in Siloam, induced our Lord to oppose a vulgar notion (which is plausible enough indeed to gain some ground among people of understanding) that they, who so conspicuously suffer, are punished as the peculiar objects of divine vengeance, for the enormity of their sins. "Think " you (says he) that they were sinners above all " men that dwelt in Jerusalem? — I tell you, " nay—but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise " perish."

The parables of the prodigal son, the unjust steward, the rich man and Lazarus, are all told with such inimitable simplicity and aptitude of allusion, and at the same time convey to us such excellent morality, that the more we contemplate them, the more must we admire and venerate their divine author.

With regard to the ten lepers, we perceive a great deal in the very short enquiry: "Were there " not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?" Ten lepers had been cured; but one only had proved grateful. "There are not found (added our Lord) " that returned to give glory to God, save this " stranger."

“ stranger.” The benefactor, who, arrogating no merit to himself, instructs the grateful to ascribe the glory to God alone, by barely reproaching the unthankful with their neglect in not ascribing it, discovers sentiments to which we ought, indeed, to aspire, but which are too pure—too elevated to be perfectly attained by frail and self-interested man.

To those who trusted in their own righteousness and despised others, the story of the Pharisee and the publican is as judiciously addressed, as it is pleasingly related.

To a great number of women, who, at the period of his crucifixion, bewailed him with bitter lamentations, he cried: “ Daughters of Jerusalem, “ weep not for me; but weep for yourselves, and “ for your children.” On such an occasion, the words of a Saviour must have deeply sunk into the female heart, at all seasons ready to vibrate to the touch of sensibility, and peculiarly susceptible of religious impressions. But, as he proceeds to foretel the fate of Jerusalem, in description appropriated to his female auditors, he retains the authority of the Prophet amidst the ignominy of the cross, and unites

the

unites the dignity of his office with condescension and compassion.

Even at the approach of death he appears a more than human being, while he pardons the penitent thief, who, feeling his own unworthiness, took refuge in the merits of Christ. “ Dost thou “ not fear God, (said the thief to his brother “ offender) seeing thou art in the same condem- “ nation?—And we indeed justly; for we receive “ the due reward of our deeds: but this man “ hath done nothing amiss. Lord, remember “ me, when thou comest into thy kingdom.” And Jesus said unto him: “ Verily I say unto “ thee—to-day shalt thou be with me in Para- “ dise.”—Whilst the malefactor displays charity towards his companion, piety towards God, the deepest humiliation on a prospect of his sins, and the strongest faith in Christ whom, perhaps, 'till that solemn hour, he had never known or seen, the Redeemer of the world arrests with eagerness even his last and dying moments, for the exhibition of infinite mercy, “ not willing that any should “ perish; but that all should come to repentance.”

After his resurrection, his interview with two of his disciples in their way to Emmaus, occasioned

his exposition of the scriptures concerning himself, to confirm their wavering faith. And though  
 “ their eyes were holden, that they should not  
 “ know him ; yet their hearts burned within them,  
 “ while he *talked* to them by the way.”

The gospel of St. John will furnish us with many incidental conversations, which the other evangelists had no opportunity of recording.

The points which our Lord discusses, to satisfy the curiosity of Nicodemus, are highly interesting to all mankind, though introduced in a private conference.

His discourse near the city of Sychar with the Samaritan woman contained very important matter, whilst it led to a revelation of himself and his doctrines to the people of Samaria ; though originating in the accidental circumstance of his meeting the woman at Jacob’s well.

The prospect of the corn-fields in the neighbourhood of the city, suggested hints of the spiritual harvest. “ Lift up your eyes (saith Jesus to his disciples) and look on the fields : for they are  
 “ white already to harvest. He, that reapeth  
 “ receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life  
 “ eternal.”

The

The cure of the infirm man at the pool of Bethesda, leads our Lord, in answer to the cavils of the Jews, to discover himself more fully than he had hitherto done, by various and striking attestations.

The question of the Jews: "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" extorts from him a most interesting reply: "My doctrine is not mine; but his that sent me!" That he received no advantages from education, we have the testimony of the Jews themselves. His ignorance of human learning was not a subject of glorying, like the pretended ignorance of Mahomet, industriously published by himself and his friends in order to confirm his claim to supernatural assistance. It was so well known—so indisputable a fact, that, not presuming to doubt or contradict it, his most inveterate enemies were filled with astonishment at his doctrine, and could only evade the force of his pretensions by ascribing what was more than human to the agency of evil spirits.

To the water which the Jews had brought into the temple from the river Shiloah, during their celebration of the feast of Tabernacles, our Saviour

directed their attention in a new and spiritual way. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, " Jesus stood and cried, saying: if any man "thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

Nor was he less happy in converting the manumission of the slaves, which was usual on the sabbatical year, into an image of spiritual emancipation from the bondage of ignorance and sin. "If ye continue in my word, ye are my disciples " indeed! and ye shall know the truth: and the "truth shall make you free."

After having opened the eyes of the blind man, Jesus cried: "For judgment I am come into " this world; that they who see not, might see; " and that they who see, might be made blind." And, addressing himself to the Pharisees who affected a more than ordinary illumination, he said: "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but " now ye say, we see; therefore your sin remain- "eth."

As he condescendingly washed the feet of his disciples, he represented to them in the liveliest colors the amiableness of a Christian humility.

His discourse with his disciples, who, at the period of Judas's apostacy, were gathered around him

him on the mount of Olives, is a beautiful consolatory strain ; flowing from the emergence of the moment, and tinctured by local allusion. From the departure of Judas, the general tenor of the conversation proceeds with a view of his impending fate, of which his disciples were not sufficiently apprized. Interrupted by their enquiries, he instantly advertes to every question whether originating in ignorance or misconception. “ I am the way, ” (said he to Thomas) the truth and the life.” And to Philip he addressed himself, in a stile of gentle rebuke : “ Have I been so long with “ thee, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip ? ” Struck by the appearance of the flourishing vineyards around him, he exclaimed : “ I am the true “ vine ; and my father is the husbandman : I am “ the vine ; ye are the branches.”

His short addresses from the cross to his mother and his beloved disciple, are truly eloquent. To his mother he saith : “ Woman, behold thy son ! ” —To his disciple, “ Behold thy mother ! ” So much, in so few words, was never uttered by a Spartan ! Well nigh the curious Greeks “ desire “ to see Jesus.”

After

After his resurrection, the unbelief of Thomas drew forth an apostrophe delightful to every man, who walks by faith, and not by sight: “Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed!”

All these remarks, admonitions, or conversations, are represented by the different evangelists, as purely incidental. And we may have observed, that amidst the various influence of temporary circumstance, our Saviour was never induced by the slightest inadvertency to drop a single sentiment which might have fled the eye of examination. Under all his observations, which are invariably connected with the ends of his mission, is couched a vast variety of instruction. And, what is very extraordinary, they have a simplicity which renders them obvious to the least intelligent, whilst they have a complication of meaning which may exercise the ingenuity of the most penetrating minds.

If we examine our Saviour's audiences, either with a view to their number or their character, we shall be more strongly disposed to receive these divine sayings as the effusions of an infallible being.

being. He spoke, in public, with fluency and boldness amidst people of every denomination—amidst believing crowds or disaffected multitudes. And he spoke, in private, with the same ease and unsuspicious intrepidity, whether encircled by ignorant and doubting friends, or dark and treacherous enemies.

At his first entrance upon his ministry, we find him “teaching in the synagogues and preaching “the Gospel of the kingdom.”

And we see him followed “by great multitudes “of the people from Galilee and from Decapolis, “from Jerusalem, from Judea, and from beyond “Jordan.” On every occasion, we mark him surrounded by vast congregations. “Great multitudes “are gathered together, on the sea-shore.” If he retire into the desert, “the people follow him on “foot out of the cities” to his dreary retreat. “If “he depart from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon,” he is there also invested by thousands.

Had he been a mere human creature, 'tis probable that he would have spoken before such promiscuous hearers with cautious apprehension, or have cloathed his doctrines in mysterious obscurity. But the general discourses of Jesus are

open

open and unreferred ; and his answers to particular enquiries immediately follow the questions that are proposed to him.

His metaphorical allusions also, are obvious to the meanest understandings. Though he delivered parables the tendency of which was not always perceived by the multitude, yet his metaphors were never drawn from remote or undiscoverable sources. The parables which had a latent meaning had always the power of attracting the crowd through the agreeableness of their imagery, while they touched on various points of instruction collateral to the main truths they concealed.

Though Jesus “ taught with authority, and not “ as the Scribes,” yet he chose to open his character, and reveal his doctrines, by slow and gradual means ; lest he should “ cast pearls before swine,” while he attempted to instruct the unprepared and unworthy ; lest he should oppress the people by a blaze of light, and thus preclude the exercise of their understanding, or the cool operation of their faith ; lest he should enforce persuasion so irresistably, as to prevent the conviction of judgment, by a too easy pre-possession of fancy and the passions ; lest he should urge his hearers to  
spread

spread his fame so rapidly, as to anticipate a part of his doctrines, render his incidental lessons needless, and counteract the chief ends of his mission.

The concealed manner, therefore, of many of his parables did not arise from any fear of the multitude.

Notwithstanding he veils so much from their eyes, the people, as he finishes his sayings, are always astonished at his doctrine.

In the mean time, the priests and the elders dispute his authority; but “are confounded by his “answers.” The Pharisees endeavour “to entangle “him in his talk;” but the result is, that “they “marvel and go their way.” The Sadducees, also, “question him; and are put to silence.”

In retirement with his disciples, it never appears that a too familiar friendship betrays him into any premature revelations of himself, or into a hasty disclosure of doctrines which his followers were not yet prepared to receive. And notwithstanding his own friends are sometimes impelled by curiosity or jealousy, or a momentary ambition, to ask him questions which they ought to have suppressed, he at no time returns such answers as

may gratify an improper passion. Instead of any unguarded expressions (which would often have dropped from a mere human being importuned in private by his friends to satisfy their wishes) our Lord, on every such occasion, converts their question into a vehicle of instruction, with a truly surprizing versatility; and never fails to fix the attention of the ignorant enquirers on objects more worthy their regard.

But he had to converse, in his more private hours, with characters very different from these undissembling followers, who were truly attached to his interests, and who at the moment they discovered any defect of judgment were unequivocally proving their simplicity. He often sat at meat with publicans and sinners, in whose company to have relaxed for an instant the decorum of his character would be to have irrecoverably destroyed his dignity and rendered all his lessons unavailing, whilst he laid himself open to the malicious reports of the profane, who would have calumniated his name, and triumphed over his wounded reputation.

The Pharisees, however, who censured him for consovering with publicans and sinners, as discreditable and indecorous, by no means imputed to him

him any improper conduct during such association ; though, as they had observed the one, we need not doubt but they were sedulous enough in their endeavors to detect the other.

If we bring back our Saviour into the circle of his own immediate followers, where we may suppose him to be, if any where, unguarded (as in sincere and unsuspected friends he might look for the closest secrecy) we shall find, that even there he must have been necessarily circumspect beyond all human power of circumspection. Even one of the twelve was, in his most retired moments, a spy upon his conduct—a minute observer of all his discourses.

On a supposition indeed that Judas Iscariot was our Saviour's undisguised adherent, 'till the very period, when, seduced by gain, he deserted his Lord, he would, nevertheless, had he been able, have brought some specific accusation against the person whom he betrayed. Could he have recollected any inconsistencies or improprieties in a single discourse of Jesus, he would doubtless have communicated them to Christ's accusers, were it only to palliate his own behaviour, by giving an aspect of justice to his treachery. Tempted and

bribed, we doubt not, by the most dazzling lures, he was unable to furnish the enemies of Christ with the slightest matter of accusation. All he could do, was simply to deliver up his Lord to persecution. And no sooner had he thus infamously acted, than, penetrated by remorse of conscience, he returned the price of his iniquity, publicly confessed his crime in having betrayed the innocent blood, and destroyed himself in despair and frenzy. Had he previously represented our Saviour, as guilty of the most trivial offence, they who heard his recantation would have upbraided him with palpable inconsistency. But the answer they returned him, directly proves the contrary.

If Judas, then, who was a companion of our Saviour, who joined him daily in social converse, and might have marked his discourses more narrowly from a jealous attention to his communications with the favoured disciple—if Judas could not call to memory one idle word that dropped from our blessed Master's tongue, at those seasons when the heart is more than usually expanded and the judgement less watchful over its warm and rapid effusions—when even the most perfect men are conscious of having uttered many things

things which are unfit for the public and would shrink from the test of enquiry—if such were the case, we may triumphantly conclude, that whatever Jesus Christ “had spoken in the closet,” might have been proclaimed to his honor “on the house-top.”

All his conversations, therefore, both in public and in private, were as judicious and blameless, as they were unstudied and free.

It may still be objected, that our Saviour’s discourses and observations are represented to us in a manner very different from that in which they were spoken.

The character, however, of the persons who recorded them, will, if I mistake not, sufficiently obviate this objection. That the discourses of Jesus were not modified according to the peculiar sentiments or taste of his memorialists, may be presumed from the simplicity of their character. They were plain illiterate men who entertained no dogmas of their own, and had no flying phantoms of perfection before their eyes to lead them astray into the wilds of speculation. The artificial beauties of composition had never been the subject of

their

their study. They neither attended to sentiment or style, as objects of taste.

The most natural way of writing, therefore, was to record every thing they saw or heard, exactly as they saw or heard it.

To omit no circumstances of the story they tell—to detail conversations with a scrupulous attention to their original order and the manner of the speakers, is the never-failing characteristic of the illiterate. They who have been little accustomed to exercise their imaginations, are never inclined to colour their narratives by fictitious infusions. They seldom use, indeed, any subsidiary embellishment; but pay an implicit regard to facts alone.

But the evangelists were, also, modest and unambitious. They were not heated by the love of fame; since, instead of recording any thing with a view to their own personal reputation, they have sometimes placed themselves in rather an unfavourable light; or, having occasion to introduce what might reflect honor on their characters, have suppressed their names or quickly passed over the circumstance, through that species of modesty which was unknown to Heathen writers, and which first appeared as a virtue in the evangelic histories. .

On

On the publication of the Gospels, they might rather have looked for censure and disgrace, than praise and honor. 'Tis impossible to consider them as actuated by any of those motives which influenced the Greeks and Romans, either in writing or publishing.

Their highest ambition was, surely, to record, if possible, the very words of Christ. The nearer they approached this point of perfection, the greater was their delight and their glory.

That they were sincere and honest also in all they told, we may safely conclude; since they could have had no sinister ends to answer by their writings. Had they thought it necessary to suppress any of our Lord's discourses, as inconsistent with the rest, or improper to be related, they must have suspected his pretensions: and their faith would have been, consequently, shaken, in proportion to the strength of these suspicions. But on the truth of what they told, their own happiness more peculiarly rested. They had resigned all earthly pleasures, for Christ. They saw themselves devoted to persecution for his sake. In the world to come were all their interests—all their hopes.

We

We cannot then imagine them composing histories in which they themselves were so nearly concerned, without a sincere conviction of the truth of what they wrote: and this they could not have felt, had they suppress any thing which, in their opinion, might invalidate or affect it. They have not only, therefore, presented us with the conversations of Christ as they really were spoken, but they have omitted none of his discourses as improper to be given to the world.

That they were not influenced, as memorialists, by a too warm attachment to his person, we shall readily believe, when we observe the relation in which they stood with our Lord. It is probable that neither St. Mark or St. Luke were acquainted with our Saviour's person. And St. John, who was admitted to a very close communion with Christ, evinced the rationality of his friendship by its permanence and consistency. Though, at the arrest of our Saviour, he, with the other disciples, forsook him and fled; yet he soon rejoined our Lord, attended him at his last moments in the face of his enemies, and uniformly proclaimed his name, amidst the bitterest trials, through a long and a persecuted life.

For

For the other evangelist, we find him on no occasion selected by Jesus out of the number of the disciples, with a view to any particular communications. We should rather, then, imagine him jealous, or envious of those for whom his master had discovered a preference, than misguided as an historian, by an immoderate attachment to our Lord himself. Whilst therefore, 'tis unlikely that St. Mark or St. Luke should have given any improper heightenings to Christ's discourses, thro' a blind attachment, as not having been acquainted with his person, we can neither suspect St. John or St. Matthew of an excessive partiality, in the character of our Lord's historians; since the friendship of the former was permanent and consistent, and that of the latter no otherwise displayed than by a general attention to Christ and his religion.

Nor were the evangelists disposed to elevate our Lord's conversations above the truth, by an enthusiastic zeal for his doctrines. The steadiness and tranquillity both of their lives and deaths in support and attestation of all he taught, must convince us that they acted under the influence of reason.

We cannot then imagine them composing histories in which they themselves were so nearly concerned, without a sincere conviction of the truth of what they wrote: and this they could not have felt, had they suppressed any thing which, in their opinion, might invalidate or affect it. They have not only, therefore, presented us with the conversations of Christ as they really were spoken, but they have omitted none of his discourses as improper to be given to the world.

That they were not influenced, as memorialists, by a too warm attachment to his person, we shall readily believe, when we observe the relation in which they stood with our Lord. It is probable that neither St. Mark or St. Luke were acquainted with our Saviour's person. And St. John, who was admitted to a very close communion with Christ, evinced the rationality of his friendship by its permanence and consistency. Though, at the arrest of our Saviour, he, with the other disciples, forsook him and fled; yet he soon rejoined our Lord, attended him at his last moments in the face of his enemies, and uniformly proclaimed his name, amidst the bitterest trials, through a long and a persecuted life.

For

For the other evangelist, we find him on no occasion selected by Jesus out of the number of the disciples, with a view to any particular communications. We should rather, then, imagine him jealous, or envious of those for whom his master had discovered a preference, than misguided as an historian, by an immoderate attachment to our Lord himself. Whilst therefore, 'tis unlikely that St. Mark or St. Luke should have given any improper heightenings to Christ's discourses, thro' a blind attachment, as not having been acquainted with his person, we can neither suspect St. John or St. Matthew of an excessive partiality, in the character of our Lord's historians; since the friendship of the former was permanent and consistent, and that of the latter no otherwise displayed than by a general attention to Christ and his religion.

Nor were the evangelists disposed to elevate our Lord's conversations above the truth, by an enthusiastic zeal for his doctrines. The steadiness and tranquillity both of their lives and deaths in support and attestation of all he taught, must convince us that they acted under the influence of reason.

The principal facts they laboured to establish, necessarily required a rational assent. And the time that elapsed before they are said to have reduced these facts into historical order, must have been sufficient to cool the fervor of passion (had they at first been inordinately zealous) into a mild and temperate warmth.

Neither the ardors of private friendship nor religious zeal will last long without the direction of judgment. They continued stedfast unto the end.

And the serenity of their minds, while they died the most excruciating deaths by the inhumanity of their bloody persecutors, was a seal that left an indelible impression.

From this character of the evangelists it will be almost unnecessary to observe, that on considering their connexion, we cannot reasonably suspect any collusion or contrivance in what they relate.

It is probable that St. Matthew and St. John were accustomed to set down such conversations of Christ as they had, severally, an opportunity of hearing, without any communication with one another;

another; as the first seems chiefly to have attended to general detail, the second to particular description. And possibly, what they memorized in this manner they did not thoroughly understand, at the time of their writing their memoirs. For if they set down every conversation immediately as they heard it, they could not have perceived the reference of one discourse to another, or have comprehended the full meaning or tendency of what they thought proper to record. Many of our Saviour's parables were delivered at one time, and explained at another.

From the slow apprehension of St. Thomas and St. Philip, but a little before our Saviour's crucifixion, we may infer that his disciples had, at first, no clear ideas of the new doctrines which he revealed.

The miraculous knowledge that enlightened their minds at the feast of Pentecost, secured them from misapprehension or mistake, in the composition of their gospels. "The Holy Ghost taught them all things, and brought all to their remembrance —whatsoever Jesus said unto them."

It was in Palestine that St. Matthew composed his Gospel, in the Hebrew language, about eight

years after our Saviour's death. But the Gospel of St. John was not written, 'till after the publication of those by St. Mark, and St. Luke; who, not having been personally known to our Saviour, were furnished with materials for their histories by St. Peter and St. Paul, at different times and distant places.

The gospel of St. John was probably composed at Ephesus, after his return from the isle of Patmos, so late as the reign of the emperor Nerva. And the beloved disciple was qualified by his more friendly intercourse with our Lord to supply the omissions of his predecessors whose histories he revised; and to exhibit to us, in addition to the general narrative, a variety of particular occurrences which bring us to a nearer view of our Saviour's character and conduct.

From this account it is clear, that the four Gospels were not fabricated on any plan preconcerted in the minds of their authors. They could not have been the product of a combination to impose upon the world. Yet they correspond together in the most beautiful harmony. And, however they may differ in some trivial points, all the conversations of our Saviour, which they contain

contain, are introduced by similar incidents, and flow with the same spontaneous ease.

We have here a further reason for concluding, that the discourses of Christ are recorded as they were spoken.

And whilst these sacred writings themselves reflect back the character of their authors, by a simplicity the most unaffected, a modesty the most unassuming, a benevolence without dissimulation, and a spirit without enthusiasm, we may rejoice in a conclusion which wants no corroborating proof.

If, therefore, we view these unconnected sayings or discourses which were incidentally delivered amidst crowds of friends and of enemies, to the discomfiture of the ill-affected—to the astonishment of all ; which are so distinct in themselves, so striking in their original and unpre-meditated application, and which are transmitted to us exactly as they were spoken and applied—if we consider all these as reducible to one harmonious system of moral and divine truth, we may well declare with the over-awed officers : “ Never man spake, like this man !”

And

And if, on the closest examination of the beautiful whole, we discover that nothing can be supplied by human ingenuity ; since nothing is omitted which is essential to the moral conduct—that, yet, there is no superfluity or redundancy—that nothing is enforced on all, which it is not the duty of all to perform, which will not apply to all countries, governments or situations—that those things which, though they may be amiable in themselves, yet every man is not able to attain, are barely hinted by remote allusion, or obliquely recommended by peculiar traits of character—that, in short, the old morality is here illustrated and refined by revelations agreeable to nature and conscience and reason—we are irresistibly impelled to venerate in this harmonious system the image of the Divinity ; and on viewing its eternal author, to exclaim again, with the trembling Centurion : “ Truly this man was the son of “ God !”

## DISCOURSE V.

I. ST. PETER, ii. 24.

*By whose stripes ye were healed.*

IT hath been the favourite object of our modern philosophers to represent man as retaining all the properties of his original nature. On this idea have hypotheses been raised, with the view of subverting the fundamental principles of Christianity. But, not to amuse ourselves by those idle speculations which can be traced to no other source than that of overweening pride and vanity, it is our duty to employ our minds in enquiries more consistent with the sobriety of reason, and in reflexions more becoming the simplicity of the Gospel.

If we look with dispassionate research, into the nature of man, we shall easily be led to acknowledge that

that he is very inferior to what he originally was, when he received from his Creator the breath of life. For, if his properties and attributes be now precisely the same as God imprest on him at his first formation, we are reduced to this conclusion : “ That he is either virtuous, or that God created “ him vicious.” That he is not virtuous, the whole volume of history, and the whole series of every one’s experience must too clearly evince ; and that God should have created him vicious, is a position which we cannot maintain, unless we give up the most rational notions of the divine benevolence. He, who is Goodness itself, can never have been the immediate cause of Evil.

It follows, then, of necessity, that some great change, subsequent to his creation, must have taken place in the nature of man.

That this change must have been owing to a violation of certain laws imposed on man by his Creator ; and that this violation was followed by the anger of God—a permanent, but yet an appeasable principle—may be inferred from the appointment of the interceding Minister, and the establishment of the propitiatory sacrifice.

From

From the earliest times, the Heathen were clearly convinced that God was a friend of virtue, and an enemy to vice. They perceived also that, as they had deviated into the paths of the latter, they must necessarily have incurred the displeasure of the Deity. To appease, therefore, the divine wrath, they had recourse to various means, such as supplications, processions, and sacrifices. In the last they more earnestly reposed their confidence; universally influenced by an idea which seems to have been originally imprest on the heart, that the blood of some animal was necessary for the expiation of sin. From the continuation of these institutions, through subsequent ages, it further appears, that the circumstances attending the important change we have noticed in human nature, were, also, transmitted to posterity.

This much may we collect from nature and the religious observances of the Heathen.

But if we open the sacred volume, we shall there see the faint outline strongly coloured; while it now presents us with our first parents in Paradise, innocent and happy, and promoting the general harmony among created beings, as “the morning stars sung “together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy;”

O

and

and now shews them guilty and wretched, conscious of having disturbed the universal order, banished from the presence of their God, unknowing where to wander—with all the world before them! Obedience would have secured to them their virtue. But in one fatal hour they yielded to the tempter, they disobeyed their Maker, they lost their innocence. Sin supplied its place: “through “sin came death:” and these, by dreadful transmission, have corrupted and laid waste the generations of men. Thus “by one man’s disobedience, many were made sinners”—a fallen degenerated race. And, conscious of this degradation, they drooped under the sense of infirmities that needed intercession, and of vices that required atonement! Hence, to preclude despair, the promise of some powerful friend was made, though indistinctly, “in the seed of the “woman that should bruise the serpent’s head.” In this memorable prophecy, that personage was first foretold, who, to reconcile the justice with the goodness of God, was himself to bear the iniquities of the world, and to be offered up, a sacrifice for sin. From the prospect of such a Saviour, comfort shone forth to illumine a race of men, who still remained

mained afflicted, though not despairing; vicious, though not abandoned. To those, who, more peculiarly cleansed from the stain of original impurity, were admitted to an extraordinary intercourse wth the Deity, the prospect of this Redeemer grew distinct and bright. As the clouds that hung over futurity disappeared, they saw in that kind Mediator, that benevolent Atoner, "one fully qualified to mediate from the purity of his will, " and one absolutely enabled to atone from the " dignity of his nature!" They saw, with prophetic eye, the humiliation of the Lord of Life; while he suffered, a voluntary sacrifice, all the bitterness of persecution, and all the agonies of death.

Thus the psalmist of Israel foretells his persecution: "The kings of the earth set themselves, " and the rulers take counsel together, against the "Lord, and against his Anointed." The same royal prophet anticipates the sufferings, and even the words of Christ upon the cross: "My God! " my God! why hast thou forsaken me? They "pierced my hands and my feet: they parted my "garments among them, and cast lots upon my "vesture. And he was brought down to the "dust of death."

And the great evangelical prophet so warmly, so beautifully represents the meekness, the patience, and the conciliatory sufferings of the Messiah; that, on viewing the mournful spectacle, the most obdurate heart might melt, and the most obstinate sinner repent him of his sins and acknowledge the infinite goodness of his God. “ All we, (says Isaiah) all we, like sheep, have gone astray. We “ have turned, every man, to his own way; and “ the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us “ all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; “ yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought, “ as a lamb, to the slaughter; and, as a sheep “ before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not “ his mouth. He is despised, and rejected of “ men—a man of sorrows, and acquainted with “ grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from “ him.—He was despised, and we esteemed him “ not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and car- “ ried our sorrows: yet did we esteem him stricken “ —smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was “ wounded for our transgressions—he was bruised “ for our iniquities. The chastisement of our “ peace was upon him; and “ *by his stripes we* “ *are healed.*”

In this manner were the sufferings of Christ predicted; and in this manner, when the destined æra arrived, did he actually suffer. The historian could add little more to the predictions of the prophet. To these the evangelists continually refer: and St. Peter hath quoted, in the words of the text, that forcible application of the Messiah's passion to ourselves: “*By whose stripes ye were bealed.*”

TO understand this application aright, and to feel its true spirit and energy, is the indispensable duty of every one who would be really a Christian. To the furtherance of so important an end, it is necessary that our minds be deeply impressed with a sense of our own insufficiency and unworthiness. Such is the foundation on which Christianity reposes. Without it the religion we profess is no more than a baseless fabric, erected by human hands, and no longer the residence of the Divinity. For we vainly profess ourselves Christians unless we see the necessity of Christ's assistance. And the necessity of Christ's assistance can be clear only to him, who knows the frailties of his nature, acknowledges

knowledges his sins, and feels himself a fallen degraded creature, and the object of God's displeasure. He only will look round him for an asylum, who dreads approaching danger. He only will have recourse to a physician, who feels himself afflicted with disease. The Christian, therefore, sensible of his infirmities, and experiencing the anguish of sin, will apply for relief to him who can alone strengthen his weakness and pour balm into his wounds. The Christian will behold his Saviour bruised for his iniquities, and chastised for his peace ; and confess, with all the fervor of gratitude, that " by the stripes of that " Saviour he is healed." He will see that " Jesus " is the lamb of God which taketh away the sins " of the world." And, though " the whole " head be sick, and the whole heart faint," he will not languish in despair ; but looking up to Jesus Christ, " through whose death when we were yet " enemies we were reconciled to God," he will find himself relieved and cherished by the ready succour vouchsafed to him from above. In short if, urged by sorrow and contrition, we fly thither for help where help only can be found ; " though our sins " be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, " though

“ though they be red like crimson they shall be  
“ as wool.”

’Tis only, then, through a conviction of our unworthiness, as fallen creatures, that the merits of a Redeemer can reinstate us in the favour of God. But, alas! how rare, how difficult is such a conviction! To “ think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think”—to value ourselves on our own acquisitions—to fancy our minds informed by the precepts, and our hearts animated with the spirit of religion, when we are scarcely acquainted with its elements, and misconceive its tendency—to look with self-complacency on our imaginary deserts, and deem ourselves the peculiar favourites of Heaven—these are the suggestions of a conceit which too many possess; and from which the best of men are not absolutely free. The greater part of those, who in the opinion of the world deserve the praise of virtue, are too ready to foster notions of their own merit—to consider a series of action that may have conciliated applause, as the result of independent exertion; and to arrogate to themselves an importance incompatible with human imbecility. But this is to “ change their glory for that which doth not profit—to forsake the

“ living

" living fountain, and to hew them out cisterns,  
 " broken cisterns, that can hold no water." The  
 principle on which depends the very existence of  
 such visionary perfection, is often no other than  
 the pride of reason, opposing its plausible arguments  
 in favour of the inherent dignity of man, to those  
 passages of scripture which so evidently exhibit  
 his humiliation, and soothing us with the vain  
 notion of meritorious conduct though, " after we  
 " have done all we are unprofitable servants." Through  
 this prevailing principle, Christianity  
 received the most formidable opposition on its first  
 introduction into the world; and through this will  
 its progress continue to be obstructed as long as  
 human nature shall blend arrogance with impotency.  
 The eloquence of the great orator St. Paul was  
 exerted with no lasting effect among the sages of  
 Athens; while his precepts directly militated  
 against the tenets of her favourite philosophy.  
 The doctrines of the Mount were distinguished by  
 a spirit very different from those of the Lyceum,  
 the Academy, or the Portico. To a Heathen glowing  
 with the heroic virtues, humility patience  
 and meekness must have appeared effeminate and  
 weak: and the wounds of an expiring warrior  
 would

would have drawn from a Grecian populace a far deeper and more interested attention, than the blood of a crucified Saviour. In these days, enlightened as they are by the religion of Christ, we are often induced, through a pleasing delusion, to contemplate the Pagan virtues, as the criteria of real greatness; and, exclusively of every other guide, to submit our actions to that standard of morality, which nature, through her own unaided efforts, hath erected. The religion of nature, it is true, could present to the more cultivated mind the forms of justice, of prudence, of fortitude, of temperance: but these were images beyond the reach of common views. Before the appearance of Christianity, a few of the wiser Heathen might have caught a glimpse from truth: yet the vulgar still wandered, uninstructed, through the regions of error. And still might they have wandered through the darkest and most dangerous ways, had no other voice than that of a few minute philosophers vouchsafed to recal them into light. The learning of the sages, indeed, was too mysterious for the multitude. In that part of their knowledge which was more obvious and communicable, they rarely condescended to instruct the meaner tribes.

So little, however, had nature discovered in all her laborious researches for the long space of four thousand years, that these unhappy sophists, though possessing the accumulated wisdom of ages, were yet dissatisfied with their various acquisitions; and on almost every point disagreed among themselves amidst endless contradictions and doubts which they could never reconcile or remove. Little, therefore, were they qualified for instructing the vulgar. It was revelation only, adapted to every capacity, that could illuminate the sage and inform the great mass of mankind. It was revelation that diffused a fresh lustre on the moral virtues, before unveiled only to a few, but now open to the observation of all. It placed them in a point of view before unknown: and, while it displayed the advantages derived from them on society, it ascertained the due limits of their power. Hence were clearly seen their inadequacy to the ends of more than temporal welfare; their insufficiency in satisfying the hopes and quieting the fears of man, which extended beyond the grave; and their consequent inability to point out the paths that led to immortal happiness and glory.

To those virtues, thus limited as they were, revelation introduced faith, hope, and charity, the heralds

heralds of immortality and light ! The curtain of ignorance was thus undrawn : and the heavenly visitants appeared, distinctly pictured—Faith, with her keen eye fixed on a distant cross, unheeding the fugacious objects around her—Hope, leaning on her sure anchor, unshaken amid the storm of life, and pointing to a more abiding country—and Charity, her countenance brightened by the benevolence of a heart expanding with the warm wish for universal happiness ! These, the fair daughters of religion, these only could administer rational comfort to the soul of man ! And may they ever continue to clear, and support us through life !

Unassisted by the Christian graces, our boasted morality is chimerical and vain. At the day of judgment, when the interests of this world shall be no more, all its fallacies will be assuredly detected. The Heathen, “ who (as St. Paul observes) “ having not the law, were a law unto themselves,” can be judged only by the religion of nature. But not so with us. In these regions of light, the best moral man can have no reasonable pretensions to the rewards of Christianity, unless he believe its doctrines, and perform its duties. He, who, amidst all the opportunities of instruction, refuses

to be taught the lessons of the Gospel, can claim no share in its promises. He, who never commemorated the passion of Christ, (and many there are reputed virtuous of this description) can have no grounds to expect a participation of the benefits that result from it. If, then, the benefits of Christ's death be precluded from such a man, the justice of God still frowns over his head, and the curse of the law remains in full force. To him might our Redeemer say, " when he  
 " standeth, at the latter day, upon the earth"—" I  
 " gave you of the blood of the new Testament—  
 " but you refused to drink of that cup ! I sacrificed  
 " my life for you ! but not one trivial pleasure  
 " have you sacrificed, in remembrance of me !  
 " Presume not to approach my throne, you, who  
 " never approached my altar!"—Thus, possibly, may be exposed the ingratitude of him, who never felt a wish, " to know the love of Christ, which  
 " passeth knowledge." Thus may he be punished, who would justify himself, a corrupt and sinful creature, before an all-perfect Creator ! " For be—  
 " hold even to the moon, and it shineth not—  
 " yea, the stars are not pure in his sight. How  
 then

“ then, can man be justified with God ? or, how  
“ can he be clean, that is born of a woman ? ”

LET us, then, if we would partake of the rewards, pay due attention to the precepts of the Gospel. Let us view them as exemplified in the character of their author, and endeavour to imitate so perfect an original. Should we feel our hearts swell with pride, we know the happy antidote. For, shall we not fall down in reverence to the dust, whilst we contemplate the actions of Him, whose whole life was one lesson of humility ? And shall we not find rest to our souls, whilst we learn of Him to be meek and lowly in heart ?

If, then, we form our conduct on so excellent a model, we may look, with serenity and joy, to the day of retribution. Humbled with our Lord on earth, with him shall we be glorified in Heaven. Partakers of his death, we shall also be partakers of his resurrection. Hence may we anticipate the period, when all our cares and miseries shall be no more—when our dearest felicities shall be refined and exalted—when charity shall triumph in the boundless expansion of happiness—when faith shall dissolve in vision, and when hope shall be lost in enjoyment !

DISCOURSE

---

## DISCOURSE VI.

---

ZEPHAN. ii. 11.

*The Lord will famiſh all the gods of the earth: and men ſhall worship Him, every one from his place, even all the iſles of the Heathen.*

**I**N these expressions of prophetic triumph a religion was foretold, whose power was to destroy the Pagan deities, dispel the gloom of superstition, and unveil the true object of worship to the view of mankind. So universally corrupted was man, at the period of this prediction, that nothing but the immediate interposition of a deity, could recal him from the darkness in which he wandered, after his evil imaginations. His heart had lost its purity, and his intellect its strength; alike depraved and weakened by the shameful gratifications of sense. His degeneracy, in respect

to

to the adoration of a deity, was, therefore, an unavoidable consequence: and he, who was to be worshipped only in spirit and in truth, was represented, as the object of devotion, under a variety of corporeal resemblances. So that religion was gradually transformed, from a spiritual system, into a mass of matter—supported only by images that met the eye; and conversant only with exterior signs and sensitive ideas.

But the days were now exultingly foretold when the fabric of idolatry was to be dissolved, and an uncorrupt theology to be substituted in its place.

On a survey of the passage before us, we may naturally refer it to Christianity; since no other religion can have any claim to the power of universally extirpating the false worship that had obtained, and is still existing in the world.

Judaism had, already, made its progress through the land of Canaan. But, though its principal feature was a pure theology, there were parts of it adapted in so striking a manner to one obscure and solitary people, the inhabitants of an inconsiderable territory, that it was necessarily circumscribed by the peculiarity of its genius. Nor hath Mahometanism any pretensions to the high privilege

lege of reclaiming mankind from that intellectual error, and that moral impurity, which had obscured their original conceptions of the one true God. The Koran is but a copy of our scriptures, so far as it exhibits the real attributes of the Divinity. And it is replete with misrepresentations of the truth. We must acknowledge, that wherever its authority hath been admitted, it hath banished all idolatrous practices. But, whilst it strongly contends for the unity of the godhead, it hath greatly vitiated morality by representing Him in characters inconsistent with a pure and perfect intelligence. If, for instance, we view Him as the distributer of carnal delights; if the paradise He shall display to man be the seat of sensuality; his worshippers can entertain no chaste ideas of His spiritual perfections. Their notions of his essence must be indistinct and clouded. To examine the character of the Mahometan dispensation, would be, at present, an impertinent discussion. But what I have observed is sufficient to prove, that it cannot be the worship, whose purity, as contradistinguished with the grossness of Paganism, was finally to be extended over all the earth.

It

It was through the Christian revelation alone, that “*the Lord was effectually, to famis all the gods of the earth, and that men were to worship Him, every one from his place—even all the isles of the Heathen.*”

This prediction hath been partially fulfilled. We have, already, seen the Sun of Righteousness arise—We have seen the demons of superstition vanishing before it. The gods of Greece have hidden their diminished heads at the splendor of the Gospel. The innumerable divinities of Rome have disappeared. And this country, once numbered among the isles of the Heathen, and reeking in the blood of human sacrifices, hath abandoned her famished deities, and “worshipped the Lord.”

The prophet might have surveyed this island through the veil of futurity, as the palladium of the genuine religion. For here, at an early period, had Christianity dispelled the mists of ignorance and folly: and here hath she triumphed in her primitive worship, that, unmanacled by frivolous ceremonies or superstitious absurdities, must necessarily exalt the reason and purify the passions.

In the mean time, the light of the Gospel we thus continue to enjoy, was diffused through dis-

tant countries. Each quarter of the globe hath felt its influence—even the dark and uninstructed regions of the new-discovered world.

Thus universal in its nature is the religion we profess.

Yet are there many countries immersed in the grossest superstition; where a variety of religions are still fostered and supported, whose form and spirit are most unfriendly to the Christian dispensation. And vast tracts of land are still inhabited by people the most barbarous, on whose minds the idea of a God hath made but a faint impression; and among whom that adoration, so natural to man, can scarcely preserve a feeble existence.

We must conclude, therefore, that a numerous tribe of false deities still remain to be "*famished*," according to Zephaniah's prophecy; and that "*many isles of the Heathen*" are still to be converted to the true worship.

And this worship can prevail only, in its full extent, where the kingdom of Christ hath been established over all the world.

The universality of the Christian kingdom is the frequent subject of prophetical description.

We

We have marked its actual commencement ; and have now only to look forward to its perfect establishment.

With this view, we pray—" Thy kingdom " come." And much is contained in this very concise petition. It is a wish, that the Christian knowledge may, in all places, be cultivated and advanced—that the sound of the Gospel may go out into all lands, and its words unto the ends of the world—that the Jew, the Turk, the Infidel and the Heathen, and all who have departed from Christ, or profess not the pure faith, may renounce their errors ; and, submitting to its laws, be entitled to the blessings of Christianity.

This general diffusion is, surely, a well-grounded expectation. It is so expressly foretold, and clearly prefigured in sacred writ, that the question will not admit of a dispute. With what energy do the prophets announce, "that all people and nations " and languages shall serve him—that all the king- " doms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of " the Lord and his Christ—that he shall gather " together the outcasts of Israel, and that the full- " ness of the Gentiles shall come unto him !" Can we, for a moment, doubt of this truth, when the

inspired of the Lord concur in the prediction—  
 “ that there shall be a Sion—a mountain seated  
 “ above all mountains, wherein God will place  
 “ his perpetual residence—to which all nations  
 “ shall flow, to learn his will, and walk in his  
 “ ways”—that God “ will create a new heaven and  
 “ a new earth ; so that the former shall not be re-  
 “ membered, nor come into mind—that he will  
 “ pour his spirit of prophecy upon all flesh—that  
 “ the earth shall be filled with the glory of the  
 “ Lord, as the waters cover the sea—and that  
 “ from the rising of the sun, to the going down  
 “ of the same, God’s name shall be great among  
 “ the Gentiles—and that, in every place, incense  
 “ shall be offered unto his name, and a pure  
 “ offering.”

But the universality of our religion, in its nature and tendency, is not only proved by these predictions, and numberless passages interspersed throughout the sacred writings, but is evident from its internal constitution.

The whole race of mankind were equally affected by the fall of their first parent : the hand of God was stretched out to punish : justice demanded punishment. Whilst vengeance was thus suspended

suspended, a mediator appeared. And that mediator was Christ. Thus man was to be reconciled to God. By the fall, he was, absolutely, degraded. By the redemption, he was, conditionally, raised.

Hence it is plain, that the merits of Christ affect all the human species. And Christianity is the new covenant, in which the means of applying these merits are set forth. Christianity, therefore, is designed for all. On this religion the interests of all mankind depend.

If we consider its doctrines as they respect the conduct, no one will doubt of their practicability in every climate, and under every circumstance. They interfere not with political concerns : they oppose themselves to no form of government, but enforce a general obedience to the higher powers. Whilst they contribute to the well-being of the individual, by refining his reason, and meliorating his nature, they evidently promote the public good. They not only teach us philanthropy, but an unlimited benevolence : and, to encourage us in the exertion of it, propose the divine goodness as the object of our imitation. In short, “ whatsoever things are true—whatsoever things are just—“ whatsoever things are decent—whatsoever things

“ are

“ are pure—whatsoever things are lovely—whatsoever things are of good report”—those things Christianity enjoins us to regard and to practice. In the mean time its sanctions, everlasting happiness and misery, confirm the hopes and fears of all mankind.

Such are the internal proofs of the universal genius of Christianity.

SINCE, therefore, we may infer from the most convincing evidence, that the kingdom of Christ will be extended over all the earth ; and since we are commanded to pray for the establishment of this spiritual dominion, it must necessarily be our duty to use every means in our power which may contribute to so desirable an end.

The most probable step towards the advancement of our religion in the world, is to promote harmony among its professors.

But so much disposed are the minds of men to disagreement and dissension, particularly on sacred subjects, that, from the first appearance of Christianity to the present hour, the benevolent followers of Christ have continually lamented the wretched consequences of religious hostilities.

The

The first Jewish and Gentile converts, though they had embraced a religion whose characteristic feature was Charity, appeared little inclined (if we may judge from many passages in the Epistle to the Romans) to divest themselves of those narrow tenets which distinguished their respective parties, which pride and self-love had concurred to strengthen, and which prejudice had represented through a false and flattering medium, as the criteria of unshaken integrity.

The Judaizing Christians, tenacious of their higher privileges as the people of God, looked down with an eye of contempt on the Heathen converts, whom they had been accustomed to consider as "aliens and outcasts and strangers to the " promises." In the mean time, the Heathen converts were ever ready, on their part, to insult the Jewish nation as "branches broken off that " themselves might be grafted in."

Against a spirit so unfriendly to the genius of their new profession, St. Paul takes frequent occasions to oppose the arguments of reason and to interest the benevolent affections. "Be not wise " (says he) in your own conceit. Recompense no " man evil for evil: and, if it be possible, as " much

“ much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”

In the subsequent ages of the Christian world, we may observe the same animosities and contentions.

At a period not very remote, the spirit of intolerance shook to their bases the pillars of the Church, and amidst the blood of martyrs, produced a scene which we cannot contemplate but with horror, as it presents to us a placid and peaceable religion obscured and tortured by the gloomiest bigotry, the wildest superstition.

It is this polemical rage, this persecuting frenzy, that hath chiefly obstructed the propagation of the Christian faith from the days of the apostles to our own.

The preachers of the Gospel, indeed, have had other obstacles in their way ; since they have been obliged to combat the sophistry of the refined and the learned, as well as the obstinacy of the bigoted and illiterate. Whilst they are to inculcate a morality unembarrassed by ceremonial observances and unadulterated by superstitious corruptions, they are to exhibit a revelation, whose doctrines, refusing to be tried by the subtleties of

the

the schools, are even now accounted—among our liberal philosophic reasoners—“ the foolishness of “ preaching !”

If, however, the worship of the true God, through Jesus Christ, were regular and uniform, there are many might be willing to embrace Christianity, whom the variety of controversies and heresies that prevail among us hath prejudiced against the religion itself. Even in these times that claim the merit of superior liberality and candor, that enjoy a more than ordinary illumination, we are invested by hosts of vain and angry disputants. We are alarmed by the wranglings of those who confidently attempt to bring down upon a level with the meanest understandings, such subjects as can never be reached by the most elevated minds. All, equally tenacious of their opinions, are sedulous to propagate them as indubitable truths, and unrelentingly asperse one another with the most opprobious epithets, amidst “ the “ bitterness and wrath” of their perverse and violent disputation.

But these obstinate contentions could never have existed, but for the ignorance or depravity of man.

R

We

We ought to be acquainted, therefore, with the extent of our understanding and the motives of our hearts (which we often mistake) before we enter into an examination of sacred writ.

If we have a sound judgment and a truly Christian simplicity, we shall, doubtless, pay the first attention to those parts of scripture, in regard to the meaning of which all the sectarists concur in sentiment. For these passages, unquestionably, contain the fundamental articles of our faith. Of the Catholic doctrine necessary to save a Christian, it was observed by an old writer, "that it had "been believed in all ages, in all places, and in "all churches." And the truly *liberal* Usher (an epithet he too well deserved to appropriate it to himself!) is known to have entertained a similar opinion. "Let us survey (says the archbishop) "the several professions of Christianity, that have "spread themselves, most conspicuously, through "the world—such as the Roman and Reformed "Churches, in our parts—those of the *Ægyptians* "and *Æthiopians* in the South, and of the *Gre- cians* and other Christians in the East. Let us "lay aside the points in which they differ from "one another, and collect into one body the ar- "ticles

“ ticles in which they all agree. And we shall  
 “ find, that in those propositions which without  
 “ all controversy are universally received in the  
 “ Christian world, so much truth is contained, as,  
 “ being joined with holy obedience, may be suf-  
 “ ficient unto everlasting salvation !”

Influenced by such enlarged and benevolent ideas, we shall be the less ardent in maintaining our judgments on the subject of doubtful or disputed passages. We shall not attempt to think for others, but allow to every man the power of determining for himself, in all matters of religious concern. In this case, we shall be the last to disturb the unity of Christian societies, in consequence of any differences of opinion. We shall all live together “ with one heart and with one “ mind,” as heirs of the same promises and candidates for the same immortality. And thus might the grounds of religious contention be effectually removed.

WERE things so situated, we might look forward, with some degree of confidence, to the completion of Zephaniah’s prophecy ; whilst all Christians co-operated (of whatever persuasion as to subor-

dinate matters) in disseminating the genuine principles of religion; and in teaching those main points, the knowledge of which is so necessary to salvation, and concerning the truth of which there is no controversy between us. We might felicitate ourselves, as the happy instruments (among others) of accelerating the period, when we shall "be "one fold under one shepherd Jesus Christ the "Righteous."

It is then that all the inhabitants of the world shall unite in the same worship, whilst they profess the pure principles, and feel the happy influence of our most holy religion—It is then that the Jews, now scattered over the earth, shall, with one consent, acknowledge the pretensions, and, with universal gratitude, contemplate the genuine character of him "whom they crucified "and slew, yet" who redeemed his people Israel—It is then that the wandering tribes of Arabia, the sons of Ishmael (now separated from the rest of mankind) shall enjoy, in concert with the nations around them, the blessings of the Gospel—It is then that the Perſian and all that believe in Mahomet, deserting the rebel standard of their prophet, shall repose in a blessed security, protected

tected by the Prince of Peace—It is then, that all the worshippers of fictitious deities, abandoning the false images of adoration, “ shall worship the “ Lord”—And whilst many a region, where the Gospel once shone, is illumined with more than former splendor, “ their sun shall no more go “ down, neither shall their moon withdraw itself—“ for the Lord shall be their everlasting light, and “ God their glory.”

Thus every religion, which ignorance or variety or ambition or interest hath created or continued in the world, shall fall before the Church triumphant: and as “ *all people join in the true worship of the Lord, every one from his place, even all the isles of the Heathen*”—the trumpet of the angel shall sound, and great voices in Heaven shall say :

“ The kingdoms of this world are become the “ kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, and he “ shall reign for ever and ever !”

## DISCOURSE

---

## DISCOURSE VII.

---

ST. LUKE, xxi. 24.

*And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captives into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*

IT is impossible that we can study the prophecies of the Old and the New Testament without acknowledging them to be one harmonious system. And we must necessarily contemplate in the Deity a most astonishing providence, whilst we survey whole nations co-operating with his will, to the completion of those sacred oracles. The conduct and the fates of the Chaldeo-Assyrians were foretold in characters not easy to be misconceived. The Medo-Persian was brought forward in the prophetic writings with a distinctness of delineation which

which might be almost mistaken for an historical account of past events. And the several revolutions of the Macedonian and the Roman empires were circumstantially described, a considerable time before the existence of either on the theatre of the world. The splendid exhibition therefore of successive princes fulfilling the prophecies with the most accurate precision, might suggest to us an idea that they must all have been familiarized to the predictions they fulfilled, and have readily acted on one obviously-preconcerted plan, in subservience to the almighty direction: yet they were utterly unacquainted with the pre-determined counsels of God; and had far other ends in view than the manifestation of his power and glory. Ignorant of the true God, they involuntarily contributed to the accomplishment of his word.

It was to execute the decrees of Heaven, that Nebuchadnezzar "carried away Judah: howbeit, " he meant it not so; neither did his heart think "so." In the same manner, the "Lord stirred up " the spirit of Cyrus," to perform a work which had been assigned him in the prophetic scriptures, more than an hundred and fifty years before his birth. The "anointed of the Lord" is introduced

by

by name. "For Jacob, my servant's sake, (faith  
" the Lord) and Israel mine elect, I have called  
" thee by thy name : I have surnamed thee,  
" though thou hast not known me."

Nor had Alexander the Great a clearer knowledge of the Divinity whom he was destined to serve. Little was he aware, that the prophet Daniel had described his conquests two centuries before they happened. And, after the death of Alexander, Epiphanes Emilius and Cleopatra were actors, also, in this great drama, according to the same consistent scheme which had been traced out for ages before they came into being, and which was only to be accomplished by their involuntary concurrence.

Whilst these transactions were passing on the earth, with a view to the Messiah's kingdom which was to commence soon after the establishment of the Roman empire, the Jewish people, who were deeply interested in every revolution, were still destined to aggrandize the triumphs of Pagan princes by a more surprizing accomplishment of the sacred predictions. They were to be destroyed, by multitudes, amidst all the horrors of desolation ; and the remnant of them to be taken captive

captive, and dispersed through every country. As the Assyrian monarch had been “led forth “ with a bridle,” to be the minister of God’s wrath on the Jews; the Roman emperors, equally ignorant of their delegation from Heaven, were to execute on the same people more astonishing vengeance, and to complete the destruction of Jerusalem.

To this subject let us direct our attention, that, surveying the captivity of the Jews and the total demolition of their city, we may be able to contemplate, in their dispersion over the earth, as striking an act of the divine power as can be displayed to the observation of man. We shall thus behold the Jews bearing witness to the truth of a religion which they rejected, and still treat with disdain; whilst, punished before our eyes for their murderous inhumanity and their obstinate unbelief, they every moment verify the words of him who introduced that religion into the world.

And in this manner shall they continue to verify his words (as the text informs us) *till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*

SINCE the first captivity of the Jews was but an inconsiderable revolution when compared to their final overthrow by the Roman armies, we may reasonably refer several of the ancient prophecies respecting the fate of Jerusalem to this later period.

Not to mention any older prophecies, Isaiah warns the Jews of a more grievous punishment than the Babylonish captivity, in these emphatical expressions : “ Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, “ lest my foul depart from thee—lest I make thee “ desolate—a land not inhabited !”—And Ezekiel accords exactly with the Jewish historian in describing the calamities of Jerusalem in these latter days : “ Thus saith the Lord God : Smite with “ thine hand, and stamp with thy foot ; and say— “ Alas ! for all the evil abominations of the house “ of Israel !—For they shall fall by the sword, by “ the famine, and by the pestilence. He that is “ far off shall die of the pestilence ; and he that “ is near shall fall by the sword ; and he that re- “ maineth and is besieged shall die by the famine : “ thus will I accomplish my fury upon them. So “ will I stretch out my hand upon them, and make “ the land desolate—yea, more desolate than the “ wilderness towards Diblath, in all their habi- “ tations :

“ tations : yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may  
 “ have some which shall escape the sword among  
 “ the nations, when ye shall be scattered through  
 “ the countries. And they that escape of you  
 “ shall remember me among the nations, whither  
 “ they shall be carried captives. And they shall  
 “ know that I am the Lord ; and that I have not  
 “ said in vain, that I would do this evil unto  
 “ them.”

To the same effect are many passages in the succeeding prophets ; particularly the prophet Daniel. But the predictions of Christ which existed about forty years before their accomplishment, and which are recorded by three of the evangelists, point out the dreadful crisis with a wonderful perspicuity and pathos.

If we turn to the gospel of St. Matthew, we cannot but sympathize with our Saviour in his lamentation over the devoted city : “ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou, that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chicken under her wings, and ye would not ! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you,

" ye shall not see me henceforth 'till ye shall say,  
 " Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the  
 " Lord !"

In the description that follows we have almost all the circumstances attending the siege so clearly represented, that every unbeliever, attentively considering it, must be proselyted to the Christian faith, unless he can prove the event to have been anterior to the prophecy.

To a few of those circumstances St. Mark also refers. And the evangelist from whom my text is taken, as unequivocally recounts this vast variety of woe.
   
 " When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea, flee to the mountains ; and let them which are in the midst of it, depart out : and let not them that are in the countries, enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them which are with child, and to them that give suck in those days : for there shall be great distress in the land ; and wrath upon this people. *And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive*

*“ captive into all nations : and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”*

If we look to the accomplishment of these predictions, we must instantly acknowledge, that never was there a more horrid slaughter than at the siege of Jerusalem, or a more distressful captivity than at the period of its demolition. Children of all ages, even to the babe that hung at the breast, were devoted to the sword. The mothers “ who gave suck in those days” were stabbed, ere they could flee to the mountains. The sick and the aged were massacred, without pity or remorse. But the Jews were in a great measure their own executioners ; while their intestine divisions and their seditious assemblies, at the very time the enemy was at their walls, occasioned the most miserable havock. And numbers fell by their own hands, abandoned to despair and frenzy. To their own infatuation and madness, indeed, we must ascribe this accumulated wretchedness. Hence famine and the pestilence combined to fill up the measure of calamity ; permitted to rage in all the forms of horror, without an effort to oppose their progress. Every Christian must here see the hand

hand of God stretched out in vengeance : even Titus confessed the presence of a deity. "It was God (said " he) who deprived the Jews of their fortresses." It was God, who " shortened those days ;" for otherwise " no flesh could have been saved."

True then was our Saviour's prediction : " *They shall fall by the edge of the sword :*" and that they " *should be led away captive into all nations,*" was as literally verified.

No less than ninety-seven thousand persons were made prisoners during the Jewish war. Of these the emperor reserved a select few to grace his triumph ; while many were sent to the mines in Ægypt, and a greater number scattered through the Roman provinces, to be exhibited with wild beasts in the theatres. And " scarcely was there a part of the " then known globe, where the Jewish people were " not dispersed" in the time of Josephus.

Meanwhile, Jerusalem was abandoned, " *to be trodden down of the Gentiles.*" The city had been completely razed, and the temple reduced to a level with the ground. The captain of the Roman army had even torn up the foundation of the temple with a plough-share. So that not even one foundation-stone could have been left upon another.

another. The prophet Micah plainly refers to this particular circumstance. "Therefore shall Zion, " for your sakes, be ploughed as a field ; and " Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain " of the Lord as the high places of the forest."

These, then, are transactions, where the hand of the Almighty was visible even to the Jew who rejected Christ, and to the Pagan who knew him not. The Christian, however, surveys in every occurrence I have described, the most exact completion of our Saviour's prophetic denunciations. He sees the Heathen blindly urged to battle by ambition, and animated only by the prospect of raising his military reputation, or of adding new territories to his country. Yet he sees the Heathen, but the servant of God—but the instrument of vengeance from on high ! He sees the Jews—and he sees their own historian involuntary witnesses to the truth of the Gospel ! He needs not the attestations of history ! He walks by sight—and not by faith !

The Jews are still a wandering and a scattered people—their city is still a ruinous heap. To attempt the restoration of the outcasts of Israel might be no other than to counteract the measures  
of

of the Almighty. Such, indeed, hath it been proved by the vain efforts of Julian to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem ; if the earthquakes and fiery eruptions which prevented the meditated work may be considered as miraculous interpositions, and not the effect of natural causes, or of artificial contrivance. And, on a candid enquiry, we should surely be inclined to the former opinion.

But, whether we allow this singular event to have been miraculous or not, we may contemplate, if we please, little less than a miracle in the present appearance of the Jewish people. The princes of the nations who had successively arisen to further and complete the schemes of Providence, all rapidly past away and are no more. But the Jews are a standing example of the divine foreknowledge and omnipotence and truth. In their dispersion over the world, they have clearly demonstrated from generation to generation, what could otherwise have been only supported by historical evidence. To this moment they bear witness to what they do not believe, whilst they fulfil before our eyes the word of God. And we cannot but remark, that they who were the most hostile in their opposition to our Saviour as a prophet, are, every instant,

instant, accomplishing his own prediction, and thus strongly and incessantly confirming his pretensions to the prophetical character. In this light we must necessarily consider them, on a view of their general dispersion. But the prophecy before us implies much more than the general dispersion of the Jews.

That they were to be scattered over the earth, and to continue, thus abandoned, 'till a determinate period in futurity, hath been sufficiently observed. But "*they were to be led away captive* " 'till the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled.' The prisoners of the Roman emperor were not only to serve their immediate masters; but to look forward to persecution in the persons of their descendants. They were to entail slavery or subjection on their children and their children's children; at the same time that they transmitted to all their race their genuine customs and manners and religion. They have, therefore, continued in a persecuted or a servile state, from the dissolution of their government to the present day. And they have invariably considered themselves as a people struggling with difficulties and dangers, and labouring under the wrath of Heaven; though

T

" their

“ their eyes are blinded that they should not see,” or attribute their punishment to its real cause.

In the mean time, they retain their ancient character. Had they not been preserved a distinct and separated people in the countries where they wandered, the marks of their dispersion must have long since ceased. But the sword of supreme justice, still suspended over their heads, prevents their being naturalized to any soil, or blended with any community. They catch no novelties of behaviour or sentiment from the societies they approach. By collision with extraneous manners, they hardly lose a particle of their own. Their usages are the same as in former times—their disposition is, characteristically, the same—the ceremonials of their religion are unchanged. And, whether they dwell among Pagans, or Mahometans, or Christians, they retain with an inflexible obstinacy every tittle of their law; and still console themselves with the hope of deliverance—with the prospect of exaltation, when the personage shall appear, who is to subdue all the kingdoms before their feet.

To survey these uncommon circumstances, and not discern in them a peculiar providence, must argue

argue a degree of infidelity that ill consorts with an ingenuous mind.

To account for these appearances by arguments drawn from philosophy, would be a futile and impertinent attempt. In the ordinary course of things, we insensibly contract the manners of those with whom we are conversant in society. In almost every association, the outlines of contrasted characters are quickly softened, so as to exhibit a less discriminating opposition. We irresistibly draw near to one another whatever obstacles may lie in our way: and we assimilate by imperceptible gradations, 'till the original differences are invisible or nearly lost. For the Jews, it may be observed that, attached to one another by more than common sympathy—the result of their unparalleled misfortunes—and deeming every people their enemy wherever their destiny might lead them, they must naturally feel little inclination to regard the usages, or imitate the fashions of their persecutors. But, in this case, the approaches of a conciliatory behaviour might be more prudent and rational, than the distance of a cowardly suspicion, or a forbidding austerity. The unfortunate, wherever they take refuge, endeavour to deserve the

privileges, by conforming themselves to the manners of the place. To this unbending temper may the Jews refer a great part of their discomforts and disquietudes—not more among the barbarous than the civilized; though from the latter they might expect a humane and even an affectionate attention, were it not for a fullness that repels benevolence, and excites indignation. It is the fullness of the conscious victim, superadded to their natural moroseness. At the siege of Jerusalem they discovered in all their actions a more than human frenzy, which operated to their destruction with greater violence and rapidity than every effort of their enemies. And, from that very period to the present, their harsh singularities and stubborn unconvalescible temper have had almost as supernatural an aspect. Nor would it, perhaps, be easier to mould their manners into softness, or give them an accommodating pliancy, than to rebuild the sacred edifice, against the decrees of Heaven. Whatever may be the causes of this disposition, which the Jews have retained for near two thousand years, amidst nations of every character, and amidst all the changes of the manners from barbarity to the highest civilization, we need not hesitate in declaring,

declaring, that it is contrary to common experience. In short, we may always observe, on a general view of past events, that the vanquished have either incorporated with the victors, in their own country ; or having been expelled from their territories, have mingled in the mass of other nations ; so as to lose almost every trace of their first characteristic distinctions.

The Jews, however, distinguished from the Gentiles in their flourishing state, as God's peculiar people, are now marked in their adversity as an alienated race. Through them the Messiah was made manifest in the flesh ; and through them he suffered for the sins of the whole world. Thus the scene of propitiatory sacrifices was awfully closed, that all might find favour with God ! From their crime in crucifying Jesus, resulted the atonement for our sins. From the punishment of that crime in their dispersion, is derived the confirmation of our faith. Both their crime and their punishment have operated to the glory of God, and the salvation of mankind !

How long the Jews are to continue in this state of captivity, we cannot determine ; since we know  
not

not when “ *the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled.*” But at that crisis, according to our Saviour’s intimation, Jerusalem “ *shall be no longer trodden down of the Gentiles.*” It is then that the Jews shall be converted to the true faith, whether scattered among Christians or Heathens. For thus saith the Lord unto Israel: “ It shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse which I have set before thee; and thou shalt call them to mind among the nations whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee; and shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day—thou and thy children, with all thine heart and with all thy soul; that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee.” But this must be attended with their conversion to Christianity—a conversion of which St. Paul is thought to be a type, and which can only perhaps be effected by the same violent measures. So splendid and so universal will it probably be, as to open the eyes of all nations,

nations, and display to them the religion of Christ and the glories of his kingdom. “ Through the “ fall of the Jewish people, salvation is come unto “ the Gentiles.” “ If their fall, then, be the “ riches of the world, and the diminishing of them “ the riches of the Gentiles, how much more shall “ their fullness be?” “ Thus shall they be no “ more a prey unto the Heathen; neither shall “ the beasts of the land devour them; but they “ shall dwell safely and none shall make them “ afraid. And they shall be no more consumed “ with hunger in the land; neither bear the shame “ of the Heathen any more.” And thus shall they be the instruments of bringing “ all people and “ nations and languages (wherever they are now dispersed) “ to serve the Lord; and all dominions “ to obey him.”

In this manner have we seen a prophetic scheme pervading all time—originally connected in the mind of God, though unravelled only to man amidst its gradual accomplishment. Neither they who uttered the prophecies, nor they who were destined to perform them, were able to comprehend the impenetrable system.

Hence,

Hence, while we observe an awful Providence, irresistibly determining the actions of man in every possible combination to its wise and glorious purposes, we survey the most unequivocal impressions of the Divinity on the everlasting Gospel, and embrace its holy mysteries, and its refined morality with reverence, with gratitude, and with joy.

“ O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom  
“ and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are  
“ his judgments, and his ways past finding out!  
“ For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or  
“ who hath been his counsellor ?”

---

## DISCOURSE VIII.

---

GENESIS, XVI. 10, 11, 12.

*And the angel of the Lord said unto her: I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. Behold, thou shalt bear a son and shalt call his name Ishmael. And he will be a wild man: his hand will be against every man—and every man's hand against him.*

WE observed, in a former discourse, that the prophetic writings appear to be one uniform system. But, there are a variety of subordinate predictions, interspersed throughout the scriptures, which have little or no connexion with the leading prophecies. Among these, there stands one singular oracle, which is as wonderful in its completion, as the oracles that predicted the dispersion of the Jews. The kingdoms of the earth have been shaken to their foundations, and

U

have

have successively crumbled into ruins. At the dissolution of one empire, a new one hath arisen in its place. One people hath passed away ; and another hath succeeded.

But the descendants of Ishmael, are, perhaps, the only race, who, according to ancient prophecy, have lived through a series of ages in a state of hostility with the countries around them ; and who have retained undiminished and unaltered the land and the manners of their progenitor. The Jews, who, like other nations, were driven from their ancient territories, have preserved their original manners and customs, though mixed with every people under Heaven. But the modern Arabians, with all the ferocious spirit of Ishmael, are said to possess the very country in which he fixed his first plantations. Thus also are they furthering the secret designs of Providence ; and unknowingly contributing to the honor of Him, with whose genuine revelations they are unacquainted, and whom they ignorantly worship through the medium of a false religion. The Arabians are, like the Jews, a living example, to confirm the truth of the sacred writings.

It may not be unedifying to confine our attention to this single point of prophecy.

Let

Let us first, therefore, survey the settlements of the Ishmaelites, and consider whether the modern Arabians are really their descendants.

We shall then examine with advantage the text that relates to the character of Ishmael; and shall be able to trace a very remarkable resemblance between the present race and the first-born of Abraham.

The reflexions resulting from such an enquiry may be attended with essential service.

THE first prophecy respecting Ishmael occurs at the period of Hagar's flight from Sarai her mistress; when the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness—by the fountain in the way to Shur. And the angel of the Lord said unto her: “I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, “ that it shall not be numbered for multitude. “ Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, “ and shalt call his name Ishmael. And he will be “ a wild man—his hand will be against every man, “ and every man's hand against him. And he shall “ dwell in the presence of all his brethren.”

“ And Hagar bare Abraham a son. And Abraham called his son's name, which Hagar bare, “ Ishmael.”

Agreeably to the angel's prediction in respect to Ishmael's descendants, God assures Abraham: "As for Ishmael, I have heard thee. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. Twelve princes shall be heget; and I will make him a great nation."

The same promise is repeated both to Abraham and to Hagar.

To Abraham the Lord said: "Of the son of the bond-woman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed." And to Hagar the angel of the Lord called out of Heaven: "Arise, lift up the lad—hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation."

The habitation of Ishmael, according to the sacred record, was in the wilderness of Paran; where, as it was expressly foretold, he became the father of twelve princes. "And they and their posterity dwelt from Havilah unto Shur—that is before Ægypt—as thou goest towards Affyria."

There are other texts in scripture, which mention the land of Havilah and Shur. We are told, that "Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah, until thou comest to Shur, which is before Ægypt." And Moses, we read, brought Israel from the Red sea,

sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur. The land of Shur was, therefore, the western boundary to that part of Arabia which ran up by the Red sea, or the Arabian gulf, towards Ægypt. And Havilah must as clearly be the eastern extremity towards the Persian gulf. So that the first settlements of the Ishmaelites between Havilah and Shur are clearly to be traced in Arabia Petræa.

That here the race of Ishmael *multiplied exceedingly, and became a great nation*, and that they have lived in this country and its vicinities from its first plantation to the present day, hath been indisputably proved both by sacred and profane writers, in concurrence with the accounts of modern travellers.

The first and second sons of Ishmael, Nebaioth and Kedar are noticed in the same passage by the prophet Isaiah. The offspring of Nabæioth seem to have been well known to the Heathen authors by the name of Nabathæi. For we often meet with this name both in the history and poetry of the Greeks and Romans. The descendants of Kedar, who are more frequently mentioned in scripture, are introduced to us by Pliny under the name of Cedreni or Cedareni, and, what is remarkable, are placed next the Nabathæi.

We

We find also Tema and Dumah, two other sons of Ishmael, in the prophecies of Isaiah. And Ptolemy mentions a city, whose name was Tema—probably the Tecma of Strabo. Another city in Arabia called Dumatha, which, we may reasonably conjecture, was derived from Dumah, is noticed by Stephanus.

If we except Jetur and Nephish which occur to us in the Chronicles, we have no further account of the Ishmaelites in scripture, with regard to their distinctive names and habitations.

The country of Iturea, indeed, mentioned by St. Luke, is supposed to be so called from Jetur; and the city and wilderness of Kedemoth, in Deuteronomy, from Kedemah, the last of the twelve Ishmaelitish princes.

We have, here, in addition to the sacred history, the accounts of various writers who, though living in different ages of the world, yet all agree in describing the Ishmaelites as the inhabitants of Arabia Petræa, where they fixed their original abode. And we may assert, on the best authority, that the Arabians highly value themselves, to this day, as the descendants of Ishmael.

If

If we inspect the character of the present Arabians, we shall clearly refer them to Ishmael as their progenitor; while we discover their morals and usages and government and military genius to be those of the patriarchal ages, unaltered through all the lapse of time.

The first part of the prediction respecting the character of Ishmael was, that "*he should be a wild man*"—which, according to the prophetic manner, includes his posterity.

The expression evidently implies, that the Ishmaelites should be an uncivilized people. And, on a general inspection of their history, we should find that they were inferior in civilization to the people around them. Their roving disposition indeed, was very similar to that of Abraham's other offspring. But we do not observe that the latter wandered long; or frequently shifted their habitations, after they had built them houses and cities. The Arabs, however, though they sometimes erected castles and towns, have been accustomed to live in tents, as well after as before they became a nation. Like the patriarch, they usually fix on some spot, where "*they can dig them wells*;" and think themselves peculiarly fortunate, if they

can

can pitch their tents on a plain intersected by streams of water, which they separate into various rills and diffuse through their encampment. But these “ wells of springing water” often occasion contention and animosities between the different tribes ; just as “ the herdsmen of Gerar strove with Isaac’s herdsmen, saying : The water is our’s.” As soon as the herbage allotted to their cattle begins to fail, (and it is, in general, but scantily supplied) they remove to another place, with all their flocks and herds. Though their camels, their herds, and their flocks are their chief support, they frequently take their weapons, their quivers, and their bows, “ and go into the field and hunt for venison.” In their intercourse with one another they have all the inartificial manners that distinguish the first rude æras of nations. Attached to their respective princes (who are not superior either in civilization or dignity to the twelve princes the sons of Ishmael), they cheerfully adhere to the few laws that are thought necessary for the common good ; and attend and guard those princes with a reverence and fidelity which more refined nations would do well to imitate. It was “ in the presence of all his brethren that Ishmael lived, and that

“ Ishmael

“ Ishmael died.” And the same associations are observed to this day. In the midst of desarts, the Arabs enjoy the simple pleasures of society. Assembling beneath their temporary roofs, they relate the transactions of past times ; and trace their genealogy through thousands of years by the assistance of tradition, which, indeed, though for the most part fabulous, yet closes in truth whilst it terminates with Ishmael. Thus fond of communicating with one another, they are not inhospitable to strangers who, amid their social parties, have the prudence to treat them with civility, and readily conform to their usages.

In regard to their religion, we know, the Arabians are most of them Mahometans, though 'tis observable that there are many in Arabia Petræa, who, still remaining Pagans, worship the images of Abraham and Ishmael as mediators between them and the Deity. The rite of circumcision they have invariably retained ; and in so peculiar a manner as to distinguish themselves, like their forefathers, from the other descendants of Ishmael. For the Arabs defer their circumcision 'till they are thirteen years old, as their progenitor had ar-

rived at that age when he was circumcised by his father.

Though the Arabians have never contracted the habits of foreigners, they have kept up from the remotest period a commercial correspondence with other nations. It is related in Genesis, that a company of Ishmaelites (whom Josephus calls a company of Arabian merchants) came from Gilead, with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh. Nor are they less conspicuous in the character of merchants at this day, than when they bought Joseph of his cruel and mercenary brethren. These mercantile transactions, however, are seldom peaceably concluded. And, pre-disposed as they are to attack and plunder the most formidable bodies of men during their routs through the desert ; they rarely negotiate matters on equal terms with those who wish to purchase their commodities, but treat all whom they meet as their enemies.

“ *Their hand* (as the text proceeds) *is against every man.*” Whilst they are “ *wild,*” or unrefined in their behaviour to all whom they know, they are implacably hostile towards their civil foes, and brutally savage against travellers.

Like

Like Ishmael, who “as he grew and dwelt in  
“the wilderness became an archer,” the inhabitants  
of the more inland parts are remarkably dextrous  
in their management of the bow; and, though  
not unacquainted with arms of a more modern  
invention, preserve their partiality for their ancient  
weapons.

And these weapons, in times of civil dissention,  
are employed against one another, with all the  
rage of inextinguishable animosity. The feuds  
that subsist between warring tribes are transmitted  
from generation to generation; nor, though they  
may be smothered for awhile, are they easily to  
be quenched but by the total extirpation of one  
of the contending parties. To drop an hereditary  
feud without having received the most humiliating  
concessions, is deemed highly disrespectful to the  
memory of those with whom it first originated,  
and treated as an infallible criterion of the basest  
degeneracy.

With respect to their foreign enemies, the Arabs  
are so immitigably fierce and daring, that their  
proneness to hostility hath been known, not unfre-  
quently, to increase in proportion to the numbers  
of their opponents. And such is the terror of an

Arabian troop, that all who approach the deserts consider themselves as insecure, though escorted by considerable armies. They who live towards the sea, are even less humanized than their neighbours ; since they unmercifully plunder every vessel that may be driven on their coast, and murder its proprietors, without respect to persons or country. In every conflict with strangers, the Arabs are commonly victorious : nor have they been universally subdued by a foreign power, or subjected to the slightest imposition of foreign laws, since their existence as a nation. This circumstance, however, by no means arises from their indifference to the transactions around them. For they not only plunder or destroy all those who enter their territories, but frequently make incursions into the adjacent countries, and wage successful war. Of all their victories, the most splendid were under the conduct of Mahomet. Yet, whilst we contemplate the rapidity of their triumphs, when inspired with enthusiastic fervors, we cannot repress our astonishment at the ferocious obstinacy of those independent tribes who refused to enlist under the banner of the impostor.

In

In the mean time, as the Ishmaelites “*had their band against every man*,” we may observe “*every man’s hand against their’s*.”

The first instance in history of an offensive attack on the Ishmaelites, seems to be an exception to their general character, as invincible warriors.

It is recorded in the Chronicles, that “*the sons of Reuben and the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, made war with the Hagarites, with Jetur and Nephish and Nodab. And they were helped against them; and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all that were with them: for they cried to God in the battle, and he was intreated of them, because they put their trust in him. And they took away their cattle—of their camels fifty thousand, and of sheep two hundred and fifty thousand, and of asses two thousand, and of men an hundred thousand. For there fell down many slain; because the war was of God. And they dwelt in their stead until the captivity.*” As these people were from their father denominated Ishmaelites, so, from Hagar the mother of Ishmael, they are said to be entitled Hagarites; or, among Heathen writers, Agareni. But it doth not appear,

that

that these names were ever promiscuously used. Among the people recounted in the eighty-third psalm as confederate against Israel, are mentioned the Edomites and the Ishmaelites, the Moabites and Hagarens. From this evident distinction we may infer, that the Hagarens were some particular Ishmaelites who lived in the neighbourhood of mount Hagar or Sinai; or (what is more probable if we consider the connexion of the Moabites and Hagarens) in the vicinity of Moab. In this situation they were more exposed to the invasion of the Reubenites and Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh. But the Hagarens were surely no other than the tribes of Jetur and Nephish included in this common appellation. The posterity, therefore, of two Ishmaelitish princes were doomed for awhile to lose their liberty. The disgrace was partial. The Ishmaelites, indeed, were still unvanquished—since the tribes of Jetur and Nephish had been separated from their brethren, under the title of Hagarens.

In the subsequent history of the world, we see various potentates attempting to reduce the unbroken spirit of the Arabian. And on the bare confines of Babylon, we find the subject Arab reluctantly

luctantly crouching to Assyrian kings. But the interior part of Arabia was impenetrable to the most numerous armies. Under the Persian and Macedonian empires, the bravery and independence of the Ishmaelites were as strikingly evinced. Nor was it in the power of the Roman arms, though every where else victorious, to destroy that palladium of liberty, which had been reposed for ages in the wilds of Arabia. The repeated efforts of the Romans to subdue the Arabs, tribe by tribe, in their most divided state, were invariably resisted with success: the oracles of Heaven were against the menaces of Rome. And, in succeeding times, the same people have been equally invulnerable, whether invaded by the Tartar or the Turk. The Selzuccian general, though he gained, amidst triumphs the most brilliant, both the throne of Persia, and the caliphate of Babylon, and rose the terror of the Eastern nations, was yet repelled, in all the career of conquest, by the invincible Arabian. And, at this moment, the northern Arabs, though employed by the Turks to harrass the independent tribes, are unable to make the slightest impression on them; or even protect the pilgrims and travellers

vellers of the Ottoman empire from depredation and death.

Thus, then, are these remarkable prophecies fulfilled in all their parts. They respect, indeed, no point of time. Their completion, though constantly visible, can never close, while the nations exist around us, distinguished by discordant religions. Their divinity, therefore, must be ever before our eyes.

FOR what particular ends the Arabians have been thus kept apart from the rest of mankind, independent on other nations, and still retaining the simplicity of the patriarchal manners, it would be vain and impertinent to enquire.

That these circumstances contributed to the favourable reception and propagation of that religion which is now established in the East, must be evident on the slightest reflexion to a philosophical mind. There is no people on earth among whom Mahometanism could have met with such success, as among the people of Arabia. Ignorant and uncultivated, they willingly received a religion whose exterior form was alluring, and whose internal structure they were not able to investigate. Bold and impetuous and at enmity with the countries around them, they

they were ready to propagate that religion by the power of the sword.

These are great and striking events, which we dare not attribute to the immediate interference of the Deity. Yet they seem to have happened as direct consequences of that singular character, which the Arabs have almost miraculously sustained from Ishmael's days, and which they have supported, according to the express predictions of Heaven.

To consider the Arabs as purposely separated from the rest of the world, in order to become at last the instruments of disseminating imposture, seems to have something in the idea which we cannot approach without fear and trembling ! Clouds and thick darkness indeed rest upon it ! The counsels of the Almighty we in vain attempt to penetrate. We need not doubt, however, but the evil before us will terminate in good, under the direction of a wise and gracious Providence.

Before the appearance of Mahometanism, the grossest Paganism prevailed in Arabia. Among the various species of idolatry which divided the Arabs, the religion of the Sabians was conspicuous in ancient times. This religion, which was in-

Y timately

timately connected with the science of judicial astrology, seemed chiefly to consist in the adoration of the stars and planets.

Yet, senseless as such worship evidently was, it led to the manifestation of our Saviour Christ to the Gentiles. The observation of a star, which indicated the birth of some considerable personage, determined the wise men of the East to travel into Judæa, and to enquire for him, who was born King of the Jews. The same star appearing where the young child lay, conducted these Arabian princes to the place of his nativity.

Thus through the influence of a false religion, was our infant Saviour acknowledged as an extraordinary person, and worshipped by the Arabians who were unconscious of the Divinity they adored.

In a similar manner may Mahometanism be converted into a means of diffusing the glories of Christ more widely through the world. And Arabia might have been the scene of notorious imposture, to become, at last, the more splendid scene of truth. It was not enough "to raise up the " tribes of Judah, and to restore the preserved of " Israel. The first-born of Abraham shall also be " called out of darkness into a marvellous light." We  
see

see the elder cast out, like Hagar, into the wilderness, and the younger driven from place to place—and both denying Him, who, through their father Abraham, was to bless all the kindreds of the earth. But, probably, the son of the bond-woman and the son of the free shall eventually co-operate to the more perfect manifestation of Christ, as they have been long ago selected from the nations to display before our eyes the truth of the prophecies. To strengthen this conjecture, we have a remarkable passage in Isaiah, where the elder sons of Ishmael are expressly named among the Gentiles “ who were to flow together to the city of the “ Lord.” “ All the flocks of Kedar shall be ga-“ thered together unto thee—the rams of Nebaioth “ shall minister unto thee : they shall come up “ with acceptance on mine altar ; and I will “ glorify the house of my glory.” That this prophecy hath never been accomplished, we may safely assert. We have reason, then, to expect its completion.

Whilst, therefore, both the Arab and the Jew unknowingly bring evidence to the truth of the scriptures, we may picture the Redeemer of the world looking forward in triumph to the period,

when, by the illumination of the one he shall be  
“ a light to lighten the Gentiles,” as by the con-  
version of the other he shall be “ the glory of his  
“ people Israel !”

## DISCOURSE

---

## DISCOURSE IX.

---

MATT. ix. 18.

*My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy  
hand upon her and she shall live.*

THE short duration of human life has been the subject of complaint or sorrow in all ages of the world. But unavailing are the murmurings or the griefs of man; since no power on earth can ward off the inevitable destiny, or divert the impending stroke of death. The principles of decay are interwoven in our constitutions. Our bodies are so framed as to have a tendency to weakness, soon after they have attained their perfect strength. Though there are some whose lives are much further protracted; yet threescore years and ten have been assigned in the scripture as the period

period of our earthly existence. It is a point which the most healthy and robust have seldom the power of exceeding. To live, indeed, to this time of life is rarely a happiness; and, therefore, little to be wished. The decrepitude that attends old age too often renders the remnants of a wasting body, both a burthen to the wretched mortal who sustains them and to those who yield him their assistance and protection.

There are few, however, who linger so long as to drop off, at last, through the mere infirmities of exhausted nature. Human life is accelerated at its decline by various causes, and is frequently cut short in the full vigor of youth. We are assailed by a numerous tribe of diseases, some of which we provoke to the attack through our own vicious or imprudent conduct. Others, in the mean time, steal gradually upon us, or instantaneously seize us, by means which no human foresight or abilities could guard against or prevent. To such disorders the young, the blooming, and the vigorous are subject, as well as the old, the faded, and the frail. To many diseases indeed, the former are more peculiarly exposed.

The

The consequence of this is, that we are taken off from the scene of life at all periods of our existence. Thus the connexions we have been forming, here, are often untimely broken; and the person, who, from all human appearances, might have hoped for a long continuance of life, and a long enjoyment of virtuous friendships is snatched away by a sudden stroke, in the midst of ardent affections, and promising expectations.

The disappearance of an aged relation who hath already gone through all the active duties with conscientiousness, and who, having been useful in his generation, hath discharged his trust to the credit and satisfaction of himself and his friends—the disappearance of such a man from the walks of society, whether it be occasioned by retirement or by death, is not the most natural subject for lamentation. He departs in the common course of things, and leaves his post for another, according to the series of succession pre-ordained by the Governor of the world. But the sudden departure of a friend, who had just arrived at that maturity in which we look for a steady attention to all the duties of morality—from whose kind and pious offices the nearer relation expected assistance

assistance and comfort, and from whose social disposition and behaviour every acquaintance derived support or pleasure to soothe the troubles of a weary pilgrimage—the departure of such a friend appears to be a just cause of anguish and distress. The child who loses a parent may be more easily reconciled to the misfortune; because it is evident, from the difference of their ages, that it happens agreeably to the regular ordinations of Providence. Instinct, indeed, as well as reason, must prepare the heart for such a loss, since it is ordered by nature, that the affections of children towards their parents should not be so strong and lively as that of parents towards their children.

The superior strength and durability of love in the parent is necessary to the preservation and well-being of his offspring, “because the parents ought “ to lay up for their children, and not children “ for the parents.” Neither doth it so soon decline, because death intervenes not so frequently to cloud it with sorrow and mourning, by snatching away the object of its delight.

For an affectionate father and mother, then, to have the child of their hopes arrested by premature disease, and taken from their eyes “to be no more “ seen,”

“seen,” must be a shock so severe and so cruel as the fortitude of human nature cannot easily recover. And there are circumstances that must aggravate the weight of this heavy calamity. Perhaps the object of their affection had been long rooted in the bosoms of those who mourn. Grown up and flourishing at the most delightful season, perhaps, the person who thus early died, might have discovered that filial regard and possess those amiable virtues and that engaging temper, which must unavoidably rivet the ties of affection, and strengthen the bonds of nature, by a new and irresistible force. The death of an infant, or of one who had but a little time shared our tenderness and engaged our guardian care, can never be attended with those heart-rending pangs that must follow the loss of the child, the companion and the familiar friend united in one beloved person. The babe, it is true, “that yet hangeth on the mother’s breasts,” cannot expire without filling the maternal bosom with anguish—the maternal eye with tears. The instinct of nature must occasion a pang at separation. But instinct soon abates of its influence, when the object to which it impelled attention is withdrawn. And the idea of an infant, who

can have left its image but faintly imprest on the mind, must quickly fade away so as hardly to be retraced.

The many pleasing peculiarities of the child who had lived to a later period—its little endearing actions, and innocent expressions, would often arise to remembrance, and furnish frequent occasions of sorrowful recollection. But even these are nothing, when compared with the more attractive qualities of riper age.

To that riper age was the lamented young woman arrived, whose funeral obsequies we are met to celebrate, and for whom her friends are mournfully assembled to pay her the last tribute of affection. She had arrived at that season of life when hope is generally lavish in its promises of happiness; when all the passions are quick in their emotions, and the judgment as yet unaided by experience, is with difficulty able to suppress the overflowings of the fancy. It is a time when a guiding hand is chiefly wanted, since it is always marked by the manifold temptations that environ the paths of unsuspecting youth. And when personal attractions are superadded to the natural gaiety of the unpractised female,

female, her simplicity is then alarmingly exposed to the snares of a licentious world.

Such were the boast of her who now lies a corpse before us—divested of all that could allure or please!—Sad and chilling thought, that brings to us in the most striking point of light the fragility of our perishable bodies. The eye, which but a short time since possess a sparkling lustre, is now closed in darkness; and the cheek which was flushed with all the bloom of health, is now despoiled of its beautiful hue—pale and sunk, and shrivelled—and soon to be corroded by the earth-worm, as it moulders in the grave.

By these reflexions I would awaken the serious meditations of those, who young and blooming as she was (perhaps their lost companion) may be too much disposed to value the possession of what is so fleeting and so vain. They too may be surprized in the same manner, by a disease that may bring them to their graves amidst all their earthly prospects!—They too may be attacked by the wasting fever that scorches up the vitals as to a cinder—the healthful frame to a terrifying skeleton!—They may remember, that the same dreadful disease had once before visited the habi-

tation of her kindred, and fixed on a sister, young and promising as herself, for the victim of an early mortality. But let me not revive the sorrows of her friends ! Let me not open the wounds that have been long closed, and bid them bleed afresh ! The anguish of this last wound may be enough for human nature to bear.

“ *The daughter which is even now dead*” may throw a gloom over the house of mourning, which nothing can immediately dispel.

Let those, however, “ who go heavily,” consider, that notwithstanding all the dangers which threaten youth — notwithstanding the peculiar snares to which their daughter was exposed, she conducted herself, after the example of her departed sister, with becoming discretion and sobriety. And, marked as she was by a calm acquiescence under the circumstances of her station, a duteous attention to her friends, and a gentleness and humility displayed among all with whom she had occasion to converse, she was not inattentive to that superior claim which religion asserts over the heart in our duty towards God.

Yet the contemplation of these qualities and these virtues will surely tend to heighten your misfortune,

misfortune, if ye lament the object ye have lost, in proportion as ye valued or esteemed it.

This must be, inevitably, the case, should ye have no other consolation than such as can be drawn from the feeble and fallacious arguments of unassisted reason.

BUT, blessed be God ! ye have a ready resource in Christianity. Though you may grieve that "*your daughter is even now dead,*" yet you will repress your sorrow whilst you take refuge in Christ, and again repeat with Jairus : "*Come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.*"

It was the faith of Jairus that bade him fly to Jesus when his daughter was dead, or "*at the point to die.*"

Let us attend to the circumstances of the story as it is related by St. Luke. "*And behold there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue ; and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house : for he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying.*" *In the mean time, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying : Thy daughter*

" daughter is dead ; trouble not the master. But  
 " when Jesus heard it, he answered him saying :  
 " Fear not, believe only—and she shall be made  
 " whole. And when he came unto the house, he  
 " suffered no man to go in, save Peter and James  
 " and John, and the father and mother of the  
 " maiden. And all wept and bewailed her. But  
 " he said : Weep not ; she is not dead ; but  
 " sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn,  
 " knowing that she was dead. And he put them  
 " all out, and took her by the hand, and called,  
 " saying : Maid arise ! And her spirit came  
 " again, and she arose, straightway. And he  
 " commanded to give her meat. And her parents  
 " were astonished."

We have, here, a lively representation of Christian faith, of divine compassion and power, and of the satisfaction and joy which every true Believer shall finally experience.

But a faint belief in Christ is unavailing. If we coldly ask, it will not be given us. If we feebly knock, the door will not be opened. The faith of a Christian will always operate on his conduct : it will produce corresponding actions, and influence his whole morality.

He

He who truly believes " will seek the Lord " where he may be found," and fall down on his knees with the humility of Jairus, before he presumes to offer his petitions at the throne of grace. It is then that the divine love will listen to his prayers — that infinite benevolence will pity his distresses, and omnipotence relieve them.

The same Jesus that restored to the fond wishes of the believing father his daughter upon earth, shall restore also to you your daughter amidst the heavens, if ye have faith in his promises—if ye obey his commands. He who had power to raise the dead, when he condescended to visit our earthly abode "in the form of a servant," will surely be able to exercise the same power at the last day " when " he shall appear in glorious majesty, the judge " of quick and dead."

That very body now lying before you, emaciated as it is, and destined to be the prey of reptiles in the grave, whilst the remnant (even the bones themselves) shall fall asunder, and be dissolved—that very body shall have every particle (however scattered abroad) reunited at the great day, when the blast of the trumpet shall gather us all to receive sentence before the judgment-seat of Christ. And

to

to that body shall the soul of your daughter (which now subsists in a separate state) return. " Her " spirit shall come again, and she shall arise."

Know, also, that your child shall arise, more gloriously than the daughter of Jairus. The latter, when restored to life, was recalled to all the infirmities of the flesh. She had the same perishing features to animate ; the same bodily appetites to satisfy. She had the same earthly tabernacle, to be inhabited awhile, and be dissolved again. Though she had once died, she was, yet, subject to death.

Not so your daughter shall rejoin you " in the " paradise of God," where she shall bloom with more than mortal beauty, and refined from every grosser desire, shall " drink the pure waters beside " the tree of life ;" where she shall never be exposed to death again, but be cloathed with the vesture of incorruption.

## DISCOURSE

---

## DISCOURSE X.

---

### I. THESSAL. iv. 13.

*For I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*

THE fate of the soul after its separation from the body, was utterly unknown to the Heathen. It was a subject on which the philosopher formed his systems, and the poet his fables. The latter were only invented to amuse, and the most probable reasonings terminated only in doubt. In the mean time the vulgar entertained such notions of a departed spirit, as scarcely led them to conjecture concerning the place of its destination.

Thus circumstanced was the Gentile world, at the period of St. Paul's preaching.

With these ideas (or scarcely any ideas at all) of a state that was to succeed the present, it is easy

A a

to

to imagine what their sensations must have been, on the loss of a beloved friend. They were men of like feelings with ourselves.

On such an event the more informed among them had recourse, we may suppose, to the opinions they had imbibed from education. But mere opinions have seldom stability enough to stand the test of misfortune.

The mind is apt to be deluded with the hope, that what flatters is true. The delusion, however, only exists 'till the very season when it is most wanted. Then its nature is ascertained, and then it vanishes. It is dissipated the very moment it is known.

Let us examine the sources of consolation that were accessible to the best-informed Heathen. On being deprived of a friend he loved and valued, he had his gods, indeed, to invoke for comfort; since the belief in a deity, necessarily implies confidence in his power to alleviate the miseries of the unfortunate. The consolation, however, to be derived from such an appeal, must be feeble and transitory. The reflexion that the spirit of his friend is irrecoverably gone; and the conjectures to what place it is departed, or whether, indeed, it any where exists, must have occurred amidst invocations

cations the most ardent—must have preceded the thought of refuge in some compassionating deity. And, whilst the reflexion had all the force of reason and experience to confirm its truth, the conjectures must have been vague and distracting, with no other support than a mass of contradictory opinion. This he would discover to be a compound, consisting of speculation and fiction—the one hardly separable from the other.

He would find some future state existing, both in the judgment of the sage and the fancy of the bard.

The probability of such a state, deduced from the apparent dignity yet unsatisfied desires and unrewarded actions of man, might strike him with a ray of hope ; but, amidst the hypothetical and jarring reasonings on the soul's immortality, that ray would soon be lost in darkness.

If he turned from philosophy to poetry, he might relieve his anxiety for a short time, by delighting his imagination with the view of elysium. But the enchanting portraiture would quickly disappear, whilst the experience of real misfortune was opposed to the expectation of visionary relief. In this season of distress, he could

derive no comfort from the shadowy prospect of futurity. On the shores of elysium, “ the sole of “ his foot could have no rest :” “ his life would “ hang in doubt before him.” He must endeavour, therefore, to acquiesce in ignorance concerning the friend whom he hath lost ; or rather, “ *he must sorrow without hope.*”

It was a friend, perhaps, who had shared with him all the pleasures and anxieties of life ; who had rejoiced with him on various occasions of innocent satisfaction ; or who had reclined on his bosom in his adversity, and felt every pressure of misfortune grow lighter through communicated sentiment. Long habituated to so dear a companion, the severity of his loss must be inexpressible. Human nature must, almost, sink beneath it.

The usual arguments employed to console the afflicted, may be coldly repeated by his attendants ; but their inefficacy is too palpable in the moments of affliction. The wise man who hath often instructed others, drops all his sententious maxims, at that hour when the application of them to himself might have evinced their solidity and use.

To compare our own fortune with the severer destiny of others—to consider that all are equally subject

subject to the fate we deplore—to reflect that time will wear out the fading traces of calamity—to think, that the substitution of new friends may repair the loss of the departed ; these are but insulting lessons to the broken in heart. Can they relieve the man who, with no hopes beyond the present scene, is deprived (and deems himself for ever deprived) of an affectionate friendship which he valued above all the world ? For such a man what remains but despair ? With no interest in this life, or another, “ he is of all men most miserable.”

Yet, if a God preside over nature, his peculiar attribute is goodness. Could a benevolent deity then have created man to be irremediably wretched ?

For the despair I have represented there was no remedy within the reach of Paganism ; though it must have arisen from the necessary dissolution of inevitable connexions. And he who was most affectionate was, ultimately, the most unhappy. The most virtuous feelings led but to misery.

We see, then, an obvious \*defect in the natural state of man. He was placed in the midst of relations, that were, apparently, to be snatched from

\* Owing to the fall.

from him for ever : he was formed for the cultivation of friendships that were instantly to be dissolved by death. He was endowed with an understanding that could perceive his infelicity, without the power of removing it. He had a memory, only to itself severe, in the recollection of evils ; and a fancy that served only to deepen the obscurity of his fate ! He had hope, that languished with no light to cherish it ; and fear, that shuddered at the unknown regions before him !

To supply this defect in the natural state of man, the discovery of some invisible connexion with another state was vainly sought by unassisted reason.

It was only the religion of Jesus that could manifest the ties of that invisible connexion, and discuss the gloom of ignorance “ *concerning them which were asleep.* ” It was the Gospel only that could administer sure comfort to the sorrowful. It was the Gospel that deprived death of its sting, and the grave of its victory. And the true Christian saw only in the feebleness of mortality, that perishable vesture, which was to drop off and leave him immortal.

In

In the Gospel, then, we may discover new arguments of consolation, that discredit the weak attempts of human vanity, to repress the overflowings of grief. But they confirm the fondest wishes of the mourner.

Thus argues the Gentile apostle with his Thessalonian converts: ‘ *I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as those which have no hope.* Whilst the destiny of the departed is unknown to you, ’tis no wonder that ye sorrow with exceeding grief. Uncertain, whether your friends shall ever be reunited to you, ’tis no wonder that you rend your hair in agony, like the Heathen around you! Tis no wonder that ye tear your garments in desperation. To such transports of affliction the very best passions of your nature must betray you. Nor, when the tide of sorrow hath subsided, do I see any rational measures for restoring you to perfect tranquillity, if this life only be our trust; since life cannot subsist without society, and its happiness results from virtuous friendships. Every thing here will remind you of your loss; and fresh losses may be your’s. Your dearest rela-

tions

tions may expire in your sight. Your last lin-  
 gering friend may pass away before you—And  
 whither he shall go, ye know not ! But, my  
 brethren, be ye comforted—ye are Christians.  
 The new religion I have been teaching you, lays  
 open the paths of death before perplexed and  
 dreary. The deceased, whom ye inter with such  
 bitter lamentation, “ shall not slumber in the  
 grave to wake no more, one long unbroken  
 sleep ! ” Attend not to the melancholy fiction,  
 though a disciple of “ your own poet ” hath  
 adorned it ! For “ if ye believe that Jesus  
 died and rose again, even so them also which  
 sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him ! ” The  
 resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of your  
 hope ! After such an incident, ye can no lon-  
 ger “ think it incredible that God should raise  
 the dead.” As Jesus rose, therefore, they who  
 sleep in him, shall rise also.”

That we shall be restored to the friend whose separation from us is the cause of our grief, is the strongest of all consolatory arguments. To be assured of this was the great, the fervent longing of unenlightened nature. And this fervent longing had its full satisfaction in Christianity.

If

If we examine the revelations of Jesus with a view of discovering clear descriptions of the joy we shall experience on recognizing our friends, and express intimations that may lead us to determine how far our happiness may depend on a reunion with them, we are indulging a very improper curiosity, for the gratification of which we may vainly search the scriptures. But the scriptures contain enough to satisfy every rational enquiry.

That we shall rise from our graves with a consciousness of our identity, is indisputable; since we cannot otherwise be called to an account "for " the things done in the body, whether they be " good or bad." And that we shall be distinguished by the same ideas and turn of thinking—the same principles, faculties, and affections which mark our characters in this preparatory state, may be safely asserted. If we are to retain this consciousness—if we are to possess our former selves, we must recal to mind, therefore, those personal connexions which engaged our thoughts and exercised our passions. The memory of those very actions by which we shall be judged, seems necessarily involved in the recollection of the circum-

stances that gave rise to them, and the persons by whose assistance and in whose behalf they were performed. We shall, otherwise, have no clear idea of their merit, or see the justice of that sentence which shall be passed upon us. In short, if we remember a part of our transactions upon earth, (and this follows of necessity) there is every reason for supposing that we shall remember the whole.

That departed spirits shall remember and be solicitous for the welfare of their earthly connexions, we may hope and believe, if any stress be laid on the conference between Abraham and Dives, respecting the relations of the rich man.

The rich man and Lazarus are introduced to us, it is true, in a parable or popular story. But this representation must fill our minds with illusory notions, as vain as the fictions of the Pagan poets, if no ideas of a future state are to be derived from it. Whether the interview were in Hades (the intermediate abode of the departed), or whether the communication were supposed between the souls of Abraham and Dives in Heaven and Hell; there is reason to conclude from a part of the conference, that the dead forget not the living—  
that

that they forget not the past. For Abraham said :  
 " Son, *remember*, that thou in thy life-time re-  
 ceivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus  
 " evil things ; but now he is comforted and thou  
 " art tormented. Then he said : I pray thee,  
 " therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to  
 " my father's house." We may here observe, that  
 Dives retains all his former notions, in regard to  
 the subordination of the poor to the rich. For,  
 though he sees the glory and happiness of Lazarus  
 opposed to his own degradation and misery, he  
 still considers the poor man as his inferior, and re-  
 quested Abraham to send the beggar with a message  
 to his father's house. " For I have five brethren,  
 " (says he), that he may testify to them, lest they  
 " also come unto this place of torment."

That relations shall derive pleasure from their meeting together in Heaven, may be clearly determined by some passages of sacred writ. The meeting " of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God" is evidently that of an earthly family. And Lazarus is represented in the parable to which I have just referred, as reposing on the bosom of his ancestor Abraham.

As to the recognition of friends in another world, I think there are texts which sufficiently prove the fact. "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," says our Saviour to the penitent thief: whence we may reasonably infer, that Jesus and the penitent would recognize each other in that spiritual world. Our Saviour, when transfigured on the mount, was distinguished by his attendants from Moses and Elias, who were also known to the apostles, perhaps by immediate revelation.

From this instance we may conclude, that when on the last day our souls shall be re-united to our glorified bodies, we shall be enabled to recognize those with whose persons we are here familiarly acquainted. Whatever the change of features may be, when our bodies are in a glorified state, 'tis probable that some marks will remain which may guide relations and friends to a recognition of each other; or that God will endue them with perceptions which may lead to a knowledge so replete with amiable enjoyment. The supposition, indeed, seems to be implied in the promise of a heavenly communion with our deceased friends. "Them who sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him."

“ him.” “ And so shall we be ever with the  
“ Lord.” “ We shall live together with Christ.”

’Tis thus Saint Paul attempts to comfort the mourners for those “ who sleep in Jesus.” And “ they who sleep in Jesus” must, undoubtedly, mean the Christian relations of the afflicted to whom our apostle addresses himself. The lesson of comfort, in any other light, loses all its force and propriety of application. If this indeed be not the argument, it is absurd and without meaning.

Surely then we shall recognize the friends whom we are to meet hereafter; or the reunion would be little worth, as far as the circumstance of their having been once our friends might be supposed to constitute its value. And, if we know them again, we shall recollect all our earthly sympathies that have their principle in virtue. For can we think that our virtuous attachments are formed to terminate with our present existence? If this were the case, our love, though founded in reason and religion, must have been necessarily connected with a transitory object. No—as we were told that our happiness will partly flow from the society of just men made perfect, such societies, begun on earth, will, we hope, be continued in Heaven. There

probably

probably our rational friendships will have the same objects on which to exercise their energies.

How far our happiness may depend on a reunion with our friends, is a question not easy to be resolved: but I suppose it will admit of considerable increase from seeing those we loved and cherished, in possession of an heavenly prize! Perhaps we ourselves had traced out for them the paths of religion, and supported them on their way by our instruction and example. Our satisfaction, therefore, on viewing them in a state of glory, whilst we congratulate ourselves as the instrument of the felicities they enjoy, must be more than we can at present imagine; and our pleasure must arise from the purest and most exalted benevolence—a benevolence worthy saints and angels!

But if our happiness be thus increased, may it not be diminished on finding our friends excluded from Heaven?

This is also a question which it would be difficult to answer, and which might carry our speculations beyond their proper bounds. Yet I may allowably observe, that if our friends be miserable through no misconduct or default of ours, the supreme Being may so far obliterate their idea from our memories

memories, as to prevent its exciting in us any painful sensations.

But the supposition, that the virtuous friendships we cultivated on earth will be renewed in Heaven, and that our happiness will be greatly augmented on experiencing the enjoyment of those we loved, is surely warranted by reason and scripture.

IF, then, we are good Christians, and are assured that our departed friends were such, we have no cause for sorrow, but rather rejoicing. No true Believer can lament the loss of his Christian relations with immoderate or incurable grief.

That this life, the pleasures of which are so fleeting and so despicable, is a mere pilgrimage, introductory to a better state, will be always present to a mind religiously disposed. What appears therefore only a momentary loss to the survivor, but inconceivable gain to the departed, cannot affect the former with excess of sorrow. All his endeavors will henceforth be exerted, to prepare himself for his expected reunion with the friend *who sleeps in Jesus*—a prospect that will constantly animate him in the performance of every religious, every social duty. And, whilst he looks forward

to

to those who have "fought the good fight," he will be diligent in encouraging others who have not yet finished their course—that so may be laid up for him the crown, which shall beam with communicated splendor through the glories of the just whom he had turned unto righteousness—that so he may be made perfect among the saints who were once his relations upon earth.

## DISCOURSE

---

## DISCOURSE XI.

---

REVELATIONS iv. 1.

*Come up hither, and I will shew thee the things  
which must be hereafter.*

THOUGH it is unquestionably wrong to make deep and curious enquiries into those matters which are only revealed to us in part, yet we should so far look into their meaning, as to acquaint ourselves with their real force and extent.

The subject of a future state of reward and punishment is so partially opened to us in the scripture, as to leave our curiosity unsatisfied about various points of happiness and misery.

At the same time we ought to settle our notions, as far as possible, concerning “*the things which must be hereafter:*” and this can only be done by fixing on our minds the easy and natural im-

port of those sacred texts which illustrate the subject.

To search into the nature, degree, and duration of reward and punishment in that awful state of retribution, hath been deemed by too many a mere labor of the inquisitive mind, which can never edify or instruct the multitude.

It is true, there are some ingenious writers who have fabricated hypotheses on these several topics, to gratify, perhaps, their own fancies rather than in confirmation of the faith.

With such I have no concern. I mean only to bring together a few simple passages of sacred writ, and to examine them in a short and cursory manner, with a view to ascertain those points of futurity, which it is proper for us to know.

To conceive determinate ideas of the nature, degree, and duration of our future happiness and misery, as far as the scriptures may warrant, will assuredly strengthen our faith, and produce a good effect on our conversations in this present world.

THAT we shall all be rewarded or punished according to our deeds, is the language of natural and revealed religion.

On

On this point, however, nature seems to hesitate ; whilst revelation ascertains its reality, and finds upon it various truths which were never perceived by the most refined reasoners of ancient days, but as involved in a mass of fabulous invention.

“ We shall all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

And, after our sentence is past, the habitation of the righteous shall be Heaven—of the unrighteous, Hell.

But what shall be the nature of their reward or punishment ?

On this particular topic the scriptures abound with figurative representation, which seems adapted to our earthly apprehensions. Nevertheless, they present us with several passages which ought, certainly, to be understood in a literal sense.

When we are told, that “ for the just is laid up a crown of righteousness which fadeth not away ; that they are cloathed in white garments ; that they shall sing Hallelujahs before the throne”—these and other similar expressions

are evidently metaphorical. But the general meaning of this metaphorical strain is sufficiently obvious. That Heaven shall be the seat of honors and of pleasures, is clearly intimated by the allusion to what are accounted such among men.

We are not, however, to suppose that the scriptures do not furnish us with more particular intimations of "the glories to be revealed to us." When we are informed, that "they shall come from " the East, and from the West, from the North, " and from the South, and shall sit down with " Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of " Heaven"—that "they who confess Christ be- " fore men shall be confess before the holy angels"—that they "shall be as the angels of God"—that "they shall live together with Jesus Christ"—that "the pure in heart shall see God"—and "shall be " ever with the Lord;" we have the nature of our felicities hereafter represented without a figure.

We have no reason to doubt—indeed we are well assured, that a great part of the pleasures to be enjoyed in the other world, shall arise from the communion of the saints. We shall converse with those in the kingdom of God who have been long celebrated on earth for their piety and integrity; and

and whom we have often wished to see, whilst excited by the glory of their names to an imitation of their virtues. We shall derive the purest happiness from the congeniality of sentiment and feeling. We shall rejoice in the recollection of all our virtuous actions, that distinguished our probationary existence : and, looking back on the manifold difficulties we have encountered — the manifold dangers we have escaped, we shall triumph in all we enjoy, contrasted with all we have suffered. Inspired with a delightful consciousness, we shall communicate our sensations and our thoughts “ to the general assembly and church of “ the first-born—to the spirits of just men made “ perfect,” who, like us, “ have fought the good “ fight—who have kept the faith.” And, amidst our mutual communications, we shall recognize our earthly friends.

\* Were there no other sacred texts to the purpose, the meeting of “ Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” would sufficiently authorize the pleasing expectation—an expectation which can alone administer any substantial comfort to those who lament the dissolution of “ friendships warm in \*death.”

In

\* See the preceding Discourse.

In the mean time, Christ himself shall acknowledge us for his servants ; recollect our fidelity and firmness amidst every temptation ; and proclaim our merits in the presence of the angels. So that a great part of our happiness shall consist in the glory of our earthly performances remembered and repeated by the Saviour of the world. What can be more animating than such an assurance ! The good Christian will consider it of little consequence, whether riches or poverty, honor or disgrace, pleasure or pain attend him on his earthly pilgrimage ; whilst protected by the armour of light, he presses forward to the heavenly Jerusalem, to meet the friendly welcome of his Lord and his God ; whilst steadily confessing Christ before men, he reposes in the confidence that Christ shall confess him before his father which is in Heaven !

We shall be admitted, also, to the society of the angels. To qualify us for conversing with those pure Intelligences, our whole constitution shall be assimilated to theirs—our capacities enlarged—our understandings refined. The mists that obscured our reason shall be dissipated. And “ though now we see through a glass darkly, we shall then see face to face ; though now we know in part, then

“ shall

“ shall we know even as also we are known.” This, indeed, will be a supreme happiness to all who have so much understanding as to be convinced, how little they can thoroughly understand in the present dispensation of things, and yet have an eager desire to know more—a desire which they cannot suppress—a desire which too often disturbs their tranquillity, notwithstanding all the efforts of religious hope and faith.

Introduced “ to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to God the judge of all”—we shall have new senses, new faculties imparted to our natures.

To gratitude and love, and all the virtuous passions we possess, shall be added affections yet unknown—the source of inconceivable delights.

It is not yet clear, indeed, “ what we shall be: but we know that when God shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him, as he is.”

Such shall be our felicities if our actions entitle us to Heaven—felicities which “ eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.”

For

For the wicked, there are texts that as expressly indicate the nature of their sufferings. Though “ to be cast into the bottomless pit—the lake of “ fire and brimstone;” or “ to be tormented by “ the worm that dieth not—the fire that is not “ quenched”—may, possibly, be figurative terms (as some commentators chuse to explain them); yet we have other expressions which can admit only of a literal interpretation.

Of these passages, indeed, I see no reason for rejecting the literal construction.

An abode, more terrible than our minds are capable of imagining, will, assuredly, be prepared for the wicked. And, since we shall all have our bodies restored to us at the general resurrection, we may suppose the wicked undergoing corporeal as well as mental punishment.

But that the bad shall “ remember” their iniquities—that they shall associate “ with the devil “ and his angels”—that they “ shall awake to “ shame and contempt”—and that they shall experience every malignant passion, on a comparison of their situation with that of the righteous, whilst “ Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are in the kingdom “ of God, and they themselves thrust out”—are

intimations

intimations too plain and striking to be misconceived.

“ Son !—remember !” said the patriarch.

Yes ! they shall remember all the past ! they shall shudder, as they rise from their graves, at the blackening prospect of their crimes, and shall experience, with the consciousness of being, the consciousness of guilt ! The worm of conscience shall be the torment of their souls. Though “ the rocks ” and the mountains were to fall on them, and “ cover them from the wrath of Heaven,” they would inevitably feel that secret worm ; since they could not escape from themselves. Were Hell to be changed into Paradise, and “ the lake of “ fire and brimstone ” into “ living waters,” that worm would still gnaw their minds, and create within themselves a more intolerable hell ! Nor could this hell be quenched, ’till the hand of omnipotence extinguished the remorse from whence it sprung, either by remitting the sins or annihilating the existence of the guilty.

But their misery shall be aggravated by the society of the devil and his angels ; who, probably, with the same unslumbering malice that ruined our progenitor, will kindle into a flame their evil

passions, and work up their animosities into the bitterest resentment and rage.

Meantime, the shameful hour when Christ himself “denied them before the angels” shall be fresh in their memories; and the view of the blessed in glory shall deepen the horrors of their wretchedness as the shadows grow darker before the splendor of the sun. Our minds are so constituted, that the idea of our own exclusion from the bliss which others enjoy, never fails to heighten our calamities. Pain becomes almost insupportable, in comparison with pleasure. What, then, must be the torments of the damned—how dreadful must “be their “weeping and gnashing of teeth,” when they behold that immensity of happiness—the lot of their fellow-creatures—which they themselves have forfeited by their crimes; when they compare disgrace with glory; when they oppose the society of accursed fiends to the communion with saints, with angels, with Christ, and with God!

With regard to the degree of rewards and punishments, the scriptural expressions are sufficiently clear to determine us in the rational opinion, that distinctions shall be made between different characters;

racers ; whether Heaven or Hell be their destiny. Though at the last day there will be only two divisions of mankind, the good and bad ; and though there will be only two states, those of happiness and misery ; yet the rewards and punishments to be distributed among mankind, shall be proportioned to the different degrees of virtue in the virtuous, and of vice in the vicious.

“ In my father’s house (says our Saviour) there are many mansions,” into which the good will not be admitted promiscuously ; but with just discrimination, according to their various deserts.

No man shall enter into the kingdom of God, who doth “ not receive it as a little child.”

“ Take heed (says Christ) that ye despise not “ one of these little ones : for I say unto you, that “ in Heaven their angels do always behold the “ face of my father.”

They, who, assailed by more than ordinary temptation, have been slightly injured in the fiery trial, but, on the whole, have retained their virtue, shall not, perhaps, be excluded from Heaven. Yet others, who have passed unspotted through the corruptions of the world, may expect a participation of purer delights.

In the same manner the wicked shall be punished, with a view to their comparative demerits.

The gates of Heaven shall be shut against the whole tribe of the condemned. The guilty shall be all cast into Hell. The scriptures mention no middle station—no intermediate space for the reception of neutral characters. Nevertheless, as the crimes of the wicked were not alike or equal in magnitude, their punishments shall be inflicted with proportionable distinctions. In their place of suffering, the bad shall be divided into different classes, according to the nature or enormity of their offences. It shall “be more tolerable for the land “ of Sodom and Gomorrha, in the day of judgment, than for other cities that shall receive a “ greater condemnation.” “ The servant who “ knew his Lord’s will and prepared not himself, “ neither did according to his will, shall be beaten “ with many stripes: but he that knew not, and “ did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be “ beaten with few.”

For the duration of rewards and punishments, take the following passages, which can hardly be misinterpreted by plain unsophisticated minds.

Of

Of the righteous we are told, that "they shall go into life eternal"—that "they shall receive in the world to come, eternal life"—that "they shall possess a house, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"—"an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away"—that "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death—neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away"—that "he will give them immortality"—and that "in his presence there are pleasures for evermore."

Of the wicked it is said, that "they shall awake to everlasting contempt"—that they are "in danger of eternal damnation"—that "they shall be punished with everlasting destruction"—that "they shall go into the place of everlasting punishment"—"where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

To the same purpose is the whole tenor of scripture. And, "besides all this, between the good and the bad there is a gulf fixed," which is impassable both to the one and to the other.

I shall

I shall not refer (for a very sufficient reason) to any of our modern disquisitions on these plain and expressive declarations of scripture.

In reference to such passages as I have just quoted, a learned § divine observes, ‘ That the words “eternal” or “for ever” signify, not figuratively but plainly and literally, “everlasting—“ without end, though not without beginning.”’ Thus angels, and the souls of men, are eternal or immortal; and the happiness they enjoy in Heaven is everlasting life—an endless and eternal weight of glory.’

Surely, if these expressions be taken literally in regard to the righteous, they cannot be otherwise understood when applied to the wicked.

But on this topic it is not my intention to expatiate.

My chief design in this discourse was to lay before you what God hath revealed to us on the subject of future happiness and misery, and to caution you, at the same time, against the vanity or presumption of looking deeper into those matters than the scriptures have given us authority to do.

TO

§ Dr. Clarke.

TO commit to memory the passages I have exhibited to you, might be attended with the best effects.

It might preserve you from the allurements of the senses ! It might destroy the relish of guilty pleasures, or of sordid lucre ! It might guard you from alarms that are transient ! It might secure you from wishes that are vain !

“ Think, then, on these things.” Let them enliven your belief: let them influence your conduct. But be not over-anxious to know more.

This life is properly the scene of action; the next shall be the scene of knowledge.

Of the future world we have as much revealed, as is consistent with the duties assigned us in the present.

We are placed here in this state of imperfection, for the trial of those virtues which become us as frail dependent creatures, and the exercise of which will finally purify our souls, and render us fit inhabitants of a more abiding country.

The Lord gives us here “ a trembling heart,” and we have “ none assurance of our life.” Our resignation, our patience, our humility, and our

faith

faith are proved by various crosses, and difficulties, and doubts.

But to be so far admitted into the secret counsels of God, as to discover our future destiny—as to be certain of our inheritance in Heaven, would annihilate the merit and even the name of resignation or fortitude, though we were subjected to all the transitory sufferings that could possibly befall us. And, in this case, that Christian humility which leads us to “work out our salvation with fear and “trembling,” would be entirely done away. - Nor, where absolute certainty existed, could there be any room for the trial of our faith.

To have our minds illuminated by clearer light, to have a distinct view of the particular species or the exact proportion of those rewards which may recompense a certain series of actions; such knowledge would be so utterly incompatible with our present situation, as to destroy the whole system of our duties towards God and towards man.

And, it is natural to think, that we are so constituted as to be incapable of conceiving much more than is already revealed to us, were God disposed to lay open, in a clearer manner, the prospect of futurity.

Were

Were we, indeed, "caught up into the third Heaven, or into Paradise," like St. Paul, we might form other conceptions of happiness than are now familiar to our minds; but they would be such as we should be unable to communicate to our fellow-creatures: we might "hear unspeakable words, which it would not be possible for man to utter." To see more of that futurity which the supreme being hath providentially veiled in darkness, would oppress our earthly senses and apprehensions. Heaven would overpower us with its glories; and Hell would overwhelm us with horror.

Let us, then, acquiesce in the knowledge of "those things which belong to us and to our children;" nor search too inquisitively into "the secret things which belong unto the Lord our God."

Let us be thoroughly acquainted with the revelations of scripture, on the subject of our future existence; but let us avoid too curious investigation. By preserving this happy medium, we shall be no ways inattentive to our earthly concerns, though we lay up for ourselves "treasures in Heaven." Animated by the prize of the

“ high-calling, we “ may long to be dissolved  
 “ and to be with Christ.” Nevertheless, we may  
 cheerfully abide in the flesh, and continue (like  
 St. Paul) with our brethren, “ for their furtherance  
 “ and joy of faith.”

“ Thus God, who commanded the light to  
 “ shine out of darknes, shall shine in our hearts ;  
 “ to give the light of the knowledge of the glory  
 “ of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. For which  
 “ cause, we faint not ; but though our outward  
 “ man perish, yet the inward man shall be renewed,  
 “ day by day ; while we look not at the things  
 “ which are seen, but at the things which are not  
 “ seen :” “ For the things which are seen, are  
 “ temporal ; but the things which are not seen,  
 “ are eternal.”

## DISCOURSE XII.

II. SAMUEL, xvi. 5.

And when king David came to Baburim, behold, there came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera. He came forth, and cursed still as he came.

IN the history of David's life, there is scarcely any period more interesting than that of his son Absalom's rebellion. At this juncture, both the friends and the enemies of the distressed monarch distinguished themselves by a more than ordinary exertion.

He is cursed at one moment by Shimei, and relieved at another by Barzillai.

The behaviour of these two men, so opposite in their characters, seems to have made a deep impression on the mind of David. The rancorous enmity discovered by the one, and the hospitable

benevolence so conspicuous in the other, at the most calamitous season of his life, could not but have produced a very powerful and lasting effect on his feelings.

The remembrance of this transaction had an influence on his writings; and directed the tenor of his sentiments, at the very hour of death.

The characters and fates, therefore, of these persons may deserve our attentive consideration.

Let us, for the present, confine our views to Shimei.

WE naturally sympathize with a fellow-creature in distress. Though related by no other ties than those of humanity, we, in some measure, share with him his sufferings. But our sympathy is more strongly excited, when a personage of distinction, to whose conduct we had been previously familiarized, appears struggling with unmerited misfortune. To see such a man insulted in the midst of his affliction, must provoke our warmest resentment.

On looking to that part of David's history which I propose to consider, we immediately enter into his feelings and situation. We mournfully ascend with

with him the mount of Olives, whilst “ he and all his people cover, every man, his head, weeping as they go up.” We accompany him to Bahurim, solicitous for his safety; and we are ready to congratulate ourselves on the attachment of his faithful band, though unequal to pursuing hosts, yet able at least to protect him from the insults of an individual.

But the hostile appearance of the son of Gera excites our astonishment: his brutality raises our indignation. 'Tis unnecessary to repeat his invectives. On David's forbearance, he curses, we find, still more.

From this view of Shimei, it will be easy to develope his character.

At first we are struck by the imprudence of his conduct—rushing, as he appears to be, on instant death. For we have seen the royal fugitive attended by a troop of adherents, sufficient in number to repel so contemptible an attack by instantly punishing the assailant. Abishai, indeed, the son of Zeruiah, himself stands forth, the ready executioner. “ Let me go over (says he) I pray thee, “ and take off his head.” There is nothing more

more inconsistent with real courage than the rashness we have remarked in Shimei.

It is probable that this extraordinary man had conceived an aversion to the king, at the time of his succession to the throne of Israel. For Shimei was related to the deposed family of Saul. Not that on David's exaltation he discovered his sentiments. 'Tis more likely that he distinguished himself as the most fawning flatterer of the court; whilst David, suspecting his character, received the incense of adulation with less complacency than the superseded monarch. Hence the disappointed courtier might have secretly cherished that envy or hatred, which only burnt for an opportunity to shew itself. He who gives vent to malevolence long smothered in his bosom, is often actuated by a temporary frenzy at the crisis that favours the display of it.

Such was precisely the case with Shimei. He saw David in affliction. It was a glorious occasion for pouring forth his stores of malice. He exulted in the thought, and hastened to execute his purpose. To accumulate insult on distress was noble vengeance.

When

When he observed David repressing the zeal of Abishai, I suspect, he was ready enough to ascribe the lenient measure to irresolution, or dejection of spirit ; and, encouraged in his wickedness, grew more insolent and abusive—a behaviour natural to servility like his ; though a man of a different disposition would have felt his calumnies recoiling on his own head from an object that was proof against them all, or have faultered through a consciousness of his meriting contemptuous silence. But Shimei was too mean and too arrogant to be checked by such ideas.

Had David, however, dispatched Abishai to slay him, he would probably have begged his life in the dust ; recanting all his curses, if unable to escape punishment by flight. His motives were the very meanest—malignity and cowardice.

To feel a momentary compunction for his offence, on observing the patience of a man whom he hath injured, seems natural to the most malvolent wretch. The little ingenuousness that remained to the depraved nature of Shimei would have been sensibly revived on a view of the meek, though calumniated monarch ; had not cowardice, which

which is the greatest enemy to liberal sentiment, been a principal ingredient in his temper.

Instead of being repelled by the melancholy spectacle of patient affliction, he feels his own importance rise in proportion to his sovereign's humiliation. And, ascribing his success to a peculiar adroitness in directing the weapons of slander, he felicitates himself on an increasing security, that gives him leisure to improve the advantages he has gained, and to complete his triumph over "the broken in heart."

His next appearance will confirm our opinion of his cowardice. For no sooner was David returning to his house on a reverse of fortune, than this abject wretch was the very first person who came out to meet the king, with supplicating looks, with expressions the most humiliating, with every outward sign that can indicate the sincerest repentance. Such, in every age, hath been the suppleness of those who have cunning enough to temporize without principles to direct their prudence; whose lives are but the sport of circumstance; whilst their opinions and language and gestures are all exactly suited to the varying features of the times.

Attend

Attend to the manner in which he addresses his sovereign, whom he had cursed but the moment before, with the bitterest execrations.

“ Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me ;  
 “ neither do thou remember that which thy ser-  
 “ vant did perversely, the day when my lord the  
 “ king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should  
 “ take it to his heart. For thy servant doth know  
 “ that I have sinned : therefore I am come the  
 “ first, this day, of all the house of Joseph, to  
 “ go down to meet my lord the king.” A stranger  
 to Shimei, or the circumstances of his case, might  
 be apt to consider this voluntary humiliation as the  
 mark of an ingenuous spirit, conscious of having  
 offended, and willing to atone for the offence by  
 the frankness of an unequivocal confession.

Such are the decisions of the superficial—the effect of too partial a survey ! The rectitude or obliquity of an action, considered apart or by itself, can rarely be determined with exactness. Yet we have too great a propensity to decide on human conduct, whilst we survey only particular parts of it, that casually attract our notice. Often are we utterly unacquainted with the actions which preceded those we judge. Flattered by the appear-

ance of sagacity in discovering the connexion of what immediately strikes us with a man's general character or situation, we instantly determine on the propriety of a deportment we have no sure means of penetrating. 'Tis this vanity, in complimenting our own discernment, that, while it furnishes us with imaginary criteria by which to form our judgments, so often misleads us into an erroneous opinion of men and manners. The consideration of the circumstances attending it, will often be a clue to the motive of an action. And by the motive only can we estimate its intrinsic value.

The self-accusation of Shimei hath no tincture of ingenuousness or contrition. It doth not flow from a consciousness of guilt. It is the language of timidity: and every word of it betrays the sycophant. "Let not *my lord* impute iniquity unto "me—thy servant did *perversely*—my *lord the* "king—the king should *take it to heart*—thy "servant doth know that I have sinned—I am "come down the *first* to meet my *lord the king*"—these expressions, that might argue loyalty in another, are, in Shimei, an evidence of servility. They are hypocritical. They are contrary to his feelings. Though he came down the *first* to meet his

his lord the king, he was far from being the first in dutiful and disinterested attention. Had he not been habituated to flattery, he would have dreaded such a representation of himself as highly imprudent in his present circumstances ; whilst he considered that to save his own life was too glaringly the principle of his activity, to admit of its being attributed to a superior degree of loyalty or attachment. Practised, however, in the arts of deception, he could not immediately divest himself of his insinuating manner.

If, at the first interview, he had fallen down before the king, and freely confessed that he had sinned, as soon as he perceived the effect of his malediction, he might have been pardoned in consequence of a recantation, suggested by compunction for his crime and gratitude at the forbearance of his sovereign. But David had too much insight into the heart to believe Shimei sincere, whatever sorrow for his outrages he might affect—whatever zeal he might ostensibly display. The change from rebellion to loyalty—from inveterate hatred to ardent attachment, would have been too rapid to be real. The amendment of the guilty is rarely instantaneous. That “man-

“*ners change with times,*” was a maxim not unknown to the king of Israel; who seeing the posture of his own affairs considerably altered, could by no means mistake the cause which worked such a revolution in his enemy.

Yet David declined putting Shimei to death, lest he should throw a damp on the present festivity—lest he should interrupt the triumph of his restoration by the mournful pomp of an execution.

“ Shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? For do I not know that I am this day king over Israel? Therefore the king said unto Shimei: Thou shalt not die! And the king sware unto him.”

The remittance of Shimei’s offence was entirely owing to his well-timed appearance: for his hypocritical speech receives no answer. It was treated with the contempt it deserved. But the probability of his obtaining his pardon at such a critical conjuncture, was a circumstance that could not escape a mind inured to artifice. The cause, therefore, of his appearance at that delicate crisis, may reasonably be referred to that wakeful policy which is continually watching the fluctuations of the times, and seizing the fortunate moment with the most versatile adroitness.

The

The nature and extent of Shimei's pardon will appear on a review of David's charge to Solomon. Though confirmed by an oath, it was by no means free and absolute. "Behold (says the king) thou hast with thee Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse, in the day when I went to Mahanaim. But he came down to meet me at Jordan; and I sware to him by the Lord; saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword. Now therefore hold him not guiltless; for thou art a wise man and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him: but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood." These were the last words of the dying king. And they have surely an ill aspect.

There is something that shocks human nature in the conduct of Sixtus Quintus, who had so much of that austerity which characterized his countrymen, as to sign a death-warrant at the moment, almost, he was himself expiring. But we can hardly repress our astonishment, on a superficial view of David; whilst, we think, we see in him a complication of cruelty, revenge and perfidy.

Had

“ ners change with times,” was a maxim not unknown to the king of Israel ; who seeing the posture of his own affairs considerably altered, could by no means mistake the cause which worked such a revolution in his enemy.

Yet David declined putting Shimei to death, lest he should throw a damp on the present festivity—lest he should interrupt the triumph of his restoration by the mournful pomp of an execution.

“ Shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel ? For do I not know that I am this day king over Israel ? Therefore the king said unto Shimei : Thou shalt not die ! And the king sware unto him.”

The remittance of Shimei’s offence was entirely owing to his well-timed appearance : for his hypocritical speech receives no answer. It was treated with the contempt it deserved. But the probability of his obtaining his pardon at such a critical conjuncture, was a circumstance that could not escape a mind inured to artifice. The cause, therefore, of his appearance at that delicate crisis, may reasonably be referred to that wakeful policy which is continually watching the fluctuations of the times, and seizing the fortunate moment with the most versatile adroitness.

The

The nature and extent of Shimei's pardon will appear on a review of David's charge to Solomon. Though confirmed by an oath, it was by no means free and absolute. "Behold (says the king) thou "haft with thee Shimei the son of Gera, a Ben- "jamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a "grievous curse, in the day when I went to "Mahanaim. But he came down to meet me "at Jordan; and I sware to him by the Lord; "saying, I will not put thee to death with the "sword. Now therefore hold him not guiltless; "for thou art a wise man and knowest what thou "oughtest to do unto him: but his hoar head "bring thou down to the grave with blood." These were the last words of the dying king. And they have surely an ill aspect.

There is something that shocks human nature in the conduct of Sixtus Quintus, who had so much of that austerity which characterized his countrymen, as to sign a death-warrant at the moment, almost, he was himself expiring. But we can hardly repress our astonishment, on a superficial view of David; whilst, we think, we see in him a complication of cruelty, revenge and perfidy.

Had

Had he simply charged his son to bring to justice an atrocious offender, we should have placed him on a footing with the Roman consul, exhibiting a strange example of inflexible severity at an hour when the heart is usually softened into weakness—when the mind, in sympathy with the drooping body, becomes incapable of any vigorous exertion.

The king of Israel, however, recommends it to Solomon “to bring down to the grave with blood “ the hoar head of his enemy, for cursing him “ with a grievous curse, in the day when he went to Mahanaim.” This appears like the antipathy of an evil mind. The remembrance of a personal affront seems to have been cherished, both in life and in death, with implacable animosity.

If the injury were barely personal, the oath which David swore was equivalent to an absolute pardon. As such it must have been received by Shimei; who could hardly imagine that David's successor would have been enjoined to revenge an offence which the only interested person had foreborne to punish, and the memory of which time might have obliterated.

On this view of things, the oath in question seems inadvertently sworn, at a period when the king,

king, elated by fortunate concurrences, was almost insensible to his enemy's invective. Since one passion not unusually counteracts the force of another, his rising resentment might at that moment have been smothered by his joy. As soon as his mind, however, was a little disengaged, his resentment probably rekindled. But his oath standing in the way of vengeance, he had no other method of appeasing his injured honor than by charging his successor, to whom the same sacred obligation appeared not to extend, with the execution of his enemy. Hath not this the appearance of treacherous reservation? Such, then, is the unamiable aspect of David's closing life!

That the curse of the son of Gera very deeply affected the king, is evident from the hundred and ninth psalm, which was obviously written on this occasion, and which contains a full rehearsal of Shimei's imprecations. But, had David been affected as a private individual, he would either have immediately punished his adversary or have treated him with contempt. The king of Israel was flagrantly insulted in the sight of his subjects. To have passed over such an offence would have disgraced his public character. The aspersion would have

have fullied the royal purple ; nor was " the Lord's " anointed " uninterested in the honor of the Deity, by whose peculiar providence he had been appointed to supersede the house of Israel. " The Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul," said Shimei—a falsehood which the Almighty was concerned to punish ; since David had transacted the whole affair under the immediate direction of God. The continuation of Shimei's curse, as recorded in the psalms—" Let his posterity be destroyed, and in the next generation let his name be clean put out"—must have been equally revolting to the almighty Judge who had declared—" I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels. My mercy shall not depart away from thee, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established, for ever, before thee : thy throne shall be established for ever."

The hundred and ninth psalm is particularly addressed to God. " Hold not thy peace O God!"—The curses of Shimei, therefore, are here exhibited in the same manner as Hezekiah spread the letter of Sennacherib before the Lord, to call down

down the just punishment on him who had reproached the living God. In the composition of this psalm, the heart of David was influenced neither by malevolence nor revenge, but by a worthy sense of the royal dignity and the majesty of the Supreme.

In the same light may we consider his last admonition, addressed with peculiar propriety to his successor, who was to prove in his own person the falsehood or frivolity of Shimei's malediction.

The charge of David is no way similar to that of Cyrus, in regard to the general doctrine of shewing kindness to friends and resentment to enemies. The king of Israel is representing, only, to his successor, the particular persons who, he suspects, may be beneficial or injurious to the state, and whom it concerns Solomon to notice, for the security of that throne over which God himself was pleased to vouchsafe his peculiar protection.

As to the appearance of treacherous equivocation in the oath, I question whether Shimei could have been deceived into the flattering idea of an absolute pardon. Such a promise of forgiveness, extorted in consideration of the jubilee, not on the

admission of his excuses, could hardly have been satisfactory to the conscious criminal.

From the moment, however, of the oath, we do not find that the king annoyed Shimei in the slightest manner ; though, probably, the behaviour of the latter rather argued a disposition to rebel, than to conciliate royalty by gratitude and obedience.

And it may admit of a doubt, whether the last words of David convey an order to put Shimei, unconditionally, to death. The words of an expiring man are always held of sacred obligation. If they curse, the curse is dreaded : if they bless, the blessing is deemed auspicious : if they predict, the prophecy is venerated as true : and, if they enjoin, the injunction is religiously regarded. Had Solomon, therefore, understood the injunction of his father as an absolute command, he would surely have observed it with the most scrupulous exactness, and have hurried Shimei to instant execution. But he seems rather to have received it as a political caution. “ Thou art a wise man (says David) “ and knowest what thou oughtest to do “ with him.”

Should

Should these reasonings, after all, be unsatisfactory, every difficulty will vanish at once, if we suppose with an ingenious \*writer, (and the supposition seems founded) that the passage in question should have been translated: “ Now, therefore, “ *neither* hold him guiltless, *nor* his hoar head “ bring thou down to the grave with blood.”

And this advice the new king precisely followed. Observing the due medium which his father had recommended, he takes the precaution to confine Shimei to Jerusalem, with the warning “ that he “ should surely die, on the day that he passed over “ the brook Kedron.”

But Shimei, restless and dissaffected even in his old age, oversteps the limits of his confinement; though he had solemnly sworn to observe the condition on which Solomon had granted him a life so little merited.

Impelled by rage and revenge against “ two of “ his servants, who had fled from him to Gath,” he forgets the interdiction of his king and the oath of the Lord, and passes the brook Kedron in pursuit of the fugitives: a fresh proof of turbulence and phrenzy.

\* See Delaney's Life of Christ. Vol. II. p. 333.

His life is now forfeited to government. A rebel and a perjured subject, he evinces by this last action his disregard to all moral obligation.

“ So the king commanded Benaiah the son of “ Jehoiada—which went out and fell upon him “ that he died: and the kingdom was established “ in the hand of Solomon.” Such are the character and fate of Shimei, who seems to have been no unimportant personage in the state. Dreaded by two kings, his removal was deemed necessary to the establishment of the throne of David !

AND what throne can be secure, with a Shimei fawning at the foot of it, or villainously plotting its subversion, behind the mask of abject hypocrisy? But though a depraved court may be, commonly, the nursery, such characters are often to be detected in situations far remote from the scene of political intrigue.

Let us not be so blinded to our own imperfections, as to think we are untainted by Shimei's vices, in the private transactions of life.

In an age where external appearances are so universally regarded, we have no reason to wonder at the prevalence of insincerity.

Amidst

Amidst the unceasing fluctuations of the manners, the moral principle must be strongly rooted to remain fixed. To flatter the great and to insult the unfortunate, may well be expected at a period, when riches grandeur and power attract general admiration ; and when lowliness and poverty are treated as disgraceful.

Let us examine our disposition and opinions. Are we perfectly right in our estimation of external things ? Are we not apt to pay respect to fortune, or bow the knee too readily to elevated rank ; or do homage which will not bear the test of sober reflexion ? Are we not thus offending against our own hearts, and violating that dignity, the sense of which can best preserve us from the meanness of adulation ? On the contrary, when we meet with a distressed object, are we not too prone to overlook his distresses ? Are we not, in truth, inattentive to real merit, when abstracted from adventitious circumstance ? If this be the case, we make some approaches towards Shimei's character. Even the best principled, who mix in the world, come a great deal too near it.

We may see others partaking more of Shimei. Versed in simulation and duplicity, they offer up undistinguishing

undistinguishing flattery to the great ; and to gain their private ends, pay a deference that contradicts their feelings. Have we not observed too many such, even in our daily transactions ? And have we not seen, on an alteration of affairs, the very person whom they had fawningly carest, the devoted object of their bitterest invective ?

They possess, however, in general, the hypocrisy of Shimei, without his temporary precipitation. Were they as unguarded as the son of Gera, they might subject themselves to as easy a detection. But, circumspect and sly, they brood mischiefs which a Shimei's violence of passion would dissipate in air. The machinations of the deceitful man are often laid bare by a sudden gust of anger, ere his designs are ripe for execution. Nevertheless, too great refinement in cunning hath counteracted many a scheme of iniquity. The hypocrite may weave his web so exquisitely fine, as to be unable, himself, to see clearly the subtleties of its texture. A plot that involves in it a multiplicity of design, hath been frequently betrayed by means of its complication. A single circumstance detected, hath been a clue to all the rest.

To

To be various in designs, therefore, must be attended with danger as well as difficulty. Integrity will gain, in an obvious manner, what hypocrisy can scarcely effect by its deepest artifices. And, if we act an upright, independent part, we may assure ourselves, however the designing flourish around us, that we shall be happy, at least, in self-approbation. Conscious of having taken every honest method for the attainment of the object we have in view, we shall suffer little, on the failure of our plans. Our hearts will not condemn us : and, " while our hearts condemn us not," though we may lose the countenance of men, " we shall " have confidence towards God !"

## DISCOURSE

---

## DISCOURSE XIII.

---

### II. SAM. xix. 32.

*Now Barzillai was a very aged man, even fourscore years old; and he had provided the king of sustenance, while he lay at Mahanaim: for he was a very great man.*

**T**HREE is scarcely a purer source of pleasure, than the contemplation of benevolence, as exemplified in the character of an affluent man. And when the benevolence of such a person is accompanied with simplicity of manners, the satisfaction is considerably heightened. We are surprised at uncorrupted nature in the midst of wealth: the novelty affords us additional delight.

Of the aged Barzillai these are striking characteristics. But there are circumstances that must still farther gratify us, in our reflexions on his conduct.

Barzillai,

Barzillai, the Gileadite, of Rogelim, is first introduced to our notice, in company with Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah, of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lodebar. With these companions, he meets the fugitive David, at the period of Absalom's usurpation. It was then that he proved his unshaken attachment to his king, in relieving him amidst danger and distress; not the least active of those " who brought beds, and basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentils, and parched pulse, and honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that were with him, to eat." And this was the charitable reflexion: " The people are weary, and hungry, and thirsty in the wilderness."

In the history of Greece, it is related of Pythias, that, though a private man, he entertained, at his own expence, the most numerous army that ever entered the Grecian territories. But when Pythias entertains Xerxes, with so vast a multitude, we rather wonder at his magnificence and ostentation, than remark his generosity or benignity. We are astonished at the stupendous exhibition of luxuries,

and have no leisure for calm observation. The more gentle courtesy of Barzillai excites very different feelings. The Gileadite brings down to his prince the product only of his garden and of his farm ; but there is variety in the simple entertainment : rural life and manners give a zest to it, and the innocent occupation of our chieftain is discovered in his unaffected hospitality. Whilst Barzillai saw “ God’s blessings spring from his “ mother earth,” he enjoyed a large portion of them, as his hereditary possession. Yet he did not appropriate them to his own use, in a selfish seclusion from the world; but was happy in sharing them with his fellow-creatures, and in rendering them subservient to the purposes of humanity. On the present emergency, he might reasonably rejoice in his riches. They enabled him to do good to his sovereign, and to manifest his zeal in the royal cause. His services to his afflicted monarch are interesting. We have not, however, a distinct view of them in the present representation, where his brethren in benevolence are as conspicuous figures as himself.

On his next appearance, as he is conducting the king over Jordan, he stands foremost in the piece—

he

he is no longer grouped with others. The dutiful Barzillai is still active in his attentions to David: and the sovereign, whom he had relieved in adversity, he now congratulates on a change of fortune.

These are attentions flowing from the heart. The politeness of modern manners is very similar in its external expressions; but it is too commonly allied to insincerity. He, who hath been bred within the precincts of a court, may “go a little way with his master”—may go up, indeed, with the prince unto the capital: but, whilst his personal services have an aspect of disinterested loyalty, perhaps he is engaged in close conference with ambition; plotting some scheme to undermine the throne, or secretly designing the ruin of a rival. Barzillai, however, was too far advanced in life for such machinations, even if his principles had favoured them; though, indeed, the hoary plotter hath been sometimes seen on the very verge of the grave!

Thus is he described in this second interview with the king: “*Now Barzillai was a very aged man, even fourscore years old: and he had provided the king with sustenance, while he lay at Mabanaim.*” Shobi, Machir, and Barzillai had provided the king

with sustenance, while he lay at Mahanaim : but the last is the only one of the three, whose services are recollected. And Barzillai was, probably, the most opulent as well as the most active. His activity is conspicuous in his coming down to congratulate the king : and it is the more remarkable on account of his age.

The dialogue or conversation that succeeds, between the king and Barzillai, will open to us the whole of this engaging character. And the king said to Barzillai : " Come thou over with me ; " and I will feed thee, with me, in Jerusalem." And Barzillai said unto the king : " How long " have I to live, that I should go up with the " king unto Jerusalem ?" Though Barzillai was a distinguished personage, he yet knew that his greatness was soon to have an end : for he had reflected that man hath but a short time to live ; and he was sensible, from the nature of human life, that his own days were drawing near to a conclusion. Had his past conduct been marked by licentiousness or vanity ; had he given way to those sensual indulgencies which are too common to men of rank and opulence ; the sentiment conveyed in the reply we are examining, would have been

been very remote from his apprehension. To smother every serious thought by the power of dissipation, seems to be the settled plan of those who are placed in elevated stations. And he who hath acquired an habitual levity, is deemed most happy by the great ones of this world. What would have been the reply of a modern favorite, to his king requesting him to pass the remainder of his days amid the luxuries of the palace? If he had declined the offer, would he have acted from the same motives that influenced Barzillai? How many are there who, yielding even a debilitated body to voluptuous enjoyments, and who having been long accustomed to check the first motions of rational reflexion, are now absolutely unable to think—except it be to plan new modes of quickening nature to a sense of pleasure, whilst there is yet but “a step between them and death?” If, however, the gray-haired sensualist can devote, with feeble efforts, to his Maker, the remnant of decayed appetites, how wretched and how contemptible is such a sacrifice! The sacrifice of Barzillai was a truly acceptable offering; though he had shewn no disinclination to innocent pleasures, while it was yet

yet in his power to enjoy them. "I am this day (continues he) " fourscore years old. And can I " discern between good and evil? Can thy ser- " vant taste what I eat or what I drink? Can I " hear, any more, the voice of singing men and " singing women? Wherefore, then, should thy " servant be yet a burthen unto my lord the king?" There is nothing of austerity or moroseness in the character of Barzillai. The argument he uses in excuse for not accepting his prince's invitation, sufficiently proves that he was by no means averse from the good things which riches ~~may~~ procure. Though virtuous and temperate, he entertained no irrational notions of abstemiousness or self-correction. While he had the power of discerning between good and evil, he was, probably, no stranger to unblameable pleasures; though he had wisdom enough to enjoy them with moderation. But, amidst all the gratifications of sense, the voice of singing men and singing women is most delightful to the unvitiated mind. For music is the only sensual enjoyment, that, while it gratifies the sense to which it is directed, can meliorate the affections of the heart. We may imagine, therefore, the uncorrupted Barzillai recollecting the vanished dream with more

more sensible emotion, than all the other pleasures he had survived. But he doth not lament the loss in a strain of peevishness or discontent; though “ all the daughters of music were brought low.”— Though he feels his infirmities, he is still calm and complacent. And his only motive for representing himself thus enfeebled, is to persuade the king that he shall prove, through the dullness of old age, a clog upon enjoyment, instead of contributing to the gratification of his master by social communication and sympathy. This is benevolence truly disinterested, instead of selfish repining or complaint. He is happy in himself, from a recollection of a life well spent: for he had “ remembered his “ Creator in the days of his youth—ere the sun, “ or the stars, or the moon were darkened.” He is happy in recalling to mind his youthful pleasures, since they never exposed him to contempt. Even then he might have been honoured as the elders—he might have been venerated as one of the aged. “ For honourable age is not that which “ standeth in length of time, nor what is measured “ by number of years. But wisdom is the gray “ hair unto man; and an unspotted life is old “ age.”

For

For the future, he is happy in the prospect of reward ; but he is aware, that his ability to entertain others is past. Neverthelefs, old and feeble as he is, he doth not retreat to the cells of solitude, and shut himself up from the view of mankind, expecting his destiny with impatience. “ Thy servant “ will go a little way over Jordan with the king.” The poor abilities he hath remaining, he is ready to exert; whether to do good, by effential services, or to oblige by little acts of civility and kindness. And “ why (said he) should the king recompense “ it me, by such a reward ?” This is, indeed, modest and unassuming. The king, in grateful remembrance of Barzillai’s friendly succor, “ while “ he lay at Mahanaim,” had exprest a wish that the good old man would accompany him to his palace at Jerusalem. ’Tis to the incident “ in the “ wilderness, where the people were weary, and “ hungry, and thirsty,” that David looks back with gratitude. Barzillai, however, appears to be unconscious of his having conferred a favor on the king. He could not but have understood the king’s allusion ; but he cautiously avoids every hint that might remind David of the obligation, from a principle of true delicacy—such as is always to be

be found in liberal minds. There are some, who actually confer favors with no other view than to enslave the obliged ; whom they behold in a state of subjection to their wills, with a triumph which gratifies their pride, at the same time that it evinces their superiority, as to the power of obliging. So far is Barzillai from arrogating any merit to himself, on a recollection of the scene, where he had raised, as it were, his dejected sovereign from the dust, that, in the whole conference, he is but representing his own weaknesses—his own inferiority. He recurs to his infirmities, with a placid resignation : “ Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in my own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother.” We are delighted at such simplicity of sentiment, and venerate his prejudices in favor of his own city, and the burial-place of his ancestors ; for they are sacred prejudices, that always reside in the unsophisticated bosom. To deride this partial attachment to one’s native spot, would be to ridicule an affection as amiable in its origin, as it is pleasing in its effects. And they who have a regard for the dead, very seldom neglect their duty to the living. Though Barzillai

remembers the grave of his father and of his mother, he does not forget his son Chimham, whom he recommends to the attention of the king, with an address that might become the manners of the politest æra. “ But behold thy servant “ Chimham—let him go over with my lord the “ king ; and do to him what shall seem good unto “ thee.”

We have, here, an opportunity of contemplating that readiness of thought, which hath the power of improving an incident to our own advantage, without the aid of hypocrisy or even of the slightest dissimulation. Nor can we help observing, that it is possible for a man to possess and practice the wisdom of this world, while he retains his sincerity unblemished. This, however, but rarely happens. And, whilst every father, like Barzillai, ought to have prudence enough to seize on incidental circumstances for the provision of his family, let him take care, that he form not connexions, by improper measures ; or introduce his children to a corrupted patronage ; sacrificing (with many around him) the interests of virtue to emolument. It might be imagined, at first sight, that Barzillai was influenced more by private considerations

fiderations than attachment to the cause of royalty, to exert himself in so extraordinary a manner. But the other parts of his conduct will by no means justify the supposition, that he came down from Rogelim, with a view of promoting his son to honor, under the specious pretence of loyal zeal. The king's answer is unsuspecting, generous, and animated : “ Chimham shall go over with me ; “ and I will do to him, that which shall seem good “ unto thee ; and whatsoever thou shalt require of “ me, that will I do for thee.”

Thus ends this interesting conversation. “ And “ all the people went over Jordan. And when “ the king was come over, the king kissed Bar- “ zillai and blessed him ; and he returned unto “ his own place.”

From this moment we hear no more of our benevolent Barzillai. He is gone into retirement, as it becomes every old man, who hath performed the offices of active life. He had, probably, been highly useful in his day ; aware, that it was incumbent on every man to do good according to his power or opportunity ; and that the best method of serving God, was by acts of beneficence to his neighbour. Old age, however, hath stolen

upon him : and now his most acceptable service is to devote his spirit to the God who gave it. To retire, is laudable in Barzillai, though censurable in those who yet are capable of acting their part, amidst society. He hath shewn his loyalty to his prince, and he hath provided for Chimham his son ; and, now, his best prospect is the grave of his father and mother.

Though “ the grasshopper is now a burthen,” he is yet resigned ; while he looks up with confidence to the God, “ who strengthens the weak hands, “ and confirms the feeble knees.” Whilst “ the “ silver cord is to be loosed—the golden bowl “ to be broken—the pitcher to be broken at the “ fountain, and the wheel at the cistern,”—he beholds, with composure, the approach of dissolution ; since he “ abideth under the shadow of “ the Almighty.”

In David’s dying charge, Barzillai is remembered, as well as Shimei. The former was probably dead ; but Solomon is exhorted “ to shew kindness “ unto his sons ; and let them be of those, who “ eat at his table.” Thus, commonly, will they be rewarded, both in their own person and the persons

persons of their families, who unite simplicity and benevolence with prudence and wisdom.

THESE cursory remarks, may, possibly, awaken the thinking mind to no unimproving reflexions. To contemplate a worthy character is, often, as useful as it is pleasing. We look on it with complacency : and, as soon as we become interested in its fate, we feel an emulative ardor, that, if it do not impel us to instant imitation, yet rectifies our erring opinions ; and gradually creates an attachment to what is good and amiable. And our nature is, insensibly, assimilated to the object we love.

To have, constantly, before our eyes such a character as Barzillai, might be infinitely serviceable at the present day.

To imitate his example, would be to render ourselves worthy both of his affluence and his honors. In this case, even the hypocritical courtier would own the attractions of our simple courtesy ; the modish trifler would admire our heartfelt politeness ; and the cunning sycophant our genuine wisdom. Nor could the voluptuary value his pleasures above our unvitiated enjoyments. Thus

happy,

happy, and diffusing happiness among men, we should not be forsaken by our God, when "gray-headed and full of days." Thus, knowing (with Barzillai) "that our tabernacle is in peace—that "our seed shall be great and our offspring as the "grass of the earth, should we come to our graves "in a good old age, like as a shock of corn "cometh in, in its season."

## DISCOURSE XIV.

PSALM CIV. 23.

*Man goeth forth unto his labor, until the evening.*

THE first employment of man, after the fall, was the care of cattle, and the culture of the earth. These were, for a considerable time, distinct occupations. "Abel was a keeper of sheep; but Cain a tiller of the ground." And when "Noah began to be an husbandman," he was confined, probably, to husbandry, in its strictest sense: indeed, it appears only, that he planted a vineyard. Those, who had the charge of cattle, in these early times, led, commonly, a wandering life. "And Abram, very rich in cattle, went up out of Ægypt: and Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents."

This

This distinction, however, shortly disappears. Jacob, who went to the flock, and brought thence two good kids of the goats, receives the blessing from his father Isaac—“ God give thee of the “ dew of Heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and “ plenty of corn and wine.”

In this manner were the patriarchs employed. Their rural cares were the source of their riches and their influence. Nor was a personal attention to their tillage and their cattle, inconsistent with the dignity of the chieftain.

The sacred writings, indeed, seem peculiarly to respect this innocent occupation, and to distinguish it by singular honors.

We find Boaz, the progenitor of David, engaged among his reapers; and condescending to marry a gleaner of the field. God himself took David away from the sheep-folds, to be king over Israel. The upright Job is represented to us, as the greatest of all the men of the East: but his wealth consisted “ in sheep, and camels, and oxen, and “ a very large husbandry.” And the glad tidings of our Saviour’s birth were, first, revealed to shepherds.

The

The profane historians and poets have also placed the rural life, in the most engaging point of view. In every country it was attended with authority, during the period of uncorrupted manners. If power were not its immediate concomitant, the husbandman was, frequently, called from his fields, to the most elevated station. The king of Elis was as skilful in managing his farm, as in governing his people. And Cincinnatus was found ploughing his paternal acres, when he was elected the dictator of Rome.

The commercial intercourse of nations contributed, in a great degree, to detach from agriculture its pristine honors: yet was it always contemplated with delight, amidst the most delicate refinements of society.

The agricultural life is highly respected, at this day. Immerst as we are in luxury, we yet value and even venerate its simplicity.

To enquire into its peculiar advantages, may neither be useless nor unseasonable; since the greater part of the present audience are deeply interested in the subject.

By such an enquiry into his situation, we shall throw light on the duties of the husbandman.

IF we consider the situation of the husbandman, in contradistinction to that of the artizan, the former will have an obvious advantage, as to the health both of his body and mind. While those who have been brought up to the busines of husbandry, enjoy the salubrity of the breeze, amidst exertions that invigorate the body; the greater number of artificers are "pent in towns and populous cities," where the tainted air is loaded with vapor and disease. The husbandman is placed at a distance from the haunts of luxury. He is almost beyond the reach of temptation. He is, surely, "not tempted like other men." And, attending to his proper calling, which requires uninterrupted vigilance and activity, he hath hardly leisure for intemperance or debauch. Yet he hath all things in abundance, while Providence blesses the labor of his hands.

But such is the extent of dissipation in cities, that even the meanest mechanics too frequently meet together, to their mutual corruption; indulging in every species of excess. The voluptuous citizen, who can purchase the greatest variety of luxuries and render every climate subservient to his pleasures, possesses, only, in a secondary manner,

her, the good creatures of God. Ignorant of the operations of nature, he must conceive but a faint notion of the great being who directs them. At least he can reflect with no very sensible pleasure on the goodness of the Deity, in sending rain upon the earth; though “the vallies,” which he hath never seen, “stand thick with corn,” and “the hills” he hath never visited, “rejoice on every side.” There is too great a propensity in mankind to exclude the Deity from his own creation; while they attribute to second causes what ought to be referred only to a superintending Providence. This strange inclination must be obviously strengthened among those, who see nothing around them but the productions of art, or matter as it is modified by human ingenuity. The confidence of such people is chiefly placed in their own works: and, though with very different sentiments, they are ready almost to join the Ægyptians, in worshipping their shields, or the Scythians, in burning incense to their swords.

In the mean time, the husbandman is so circumstanced as to see his own labors more peculiarly directed by Him, who “knows all the fowls upon

“ the mountains, and the cattle upon a thousand  
“ hills !”

While “ some put their trust in chariots, and  
“ some in horses, he remembers the name of the  
“ Lord his God.”

He is placed, as it were, nearer to the Divinity  
than others, by having an immediate intercourse  
with nature. Through all the variety of the sea-  
sons, he cannot but view God in his works.  
Whether he observe the vegetation of the reviving  
year, when the furrows are shaded by the spring-  
ing wheat which (though apparently tender) was  
sufficiently strong to resist the frosts of winter ;  
whether he is delighted with the summer-fruitage,  
or his wishes are gratified by autumnal plenty, is  
it possible that he can help experiencing the per-  
petual sense of a heavenly Benefactor ? Does he not  
see that it is God “ who bringeth forth grass for  
“ the cattle, and bread to strengthen man’s heart ? ”  
Even in winter, when all things are torpid and  
dreary, doth he not discover his God in the clouds ?  
Doth he not hear him in the storm, while “ he  
“ maketh darkness his pavilion, and rideth upon  
“ the wings of the wind ? ”

And

And his perseverance in well-doing shall be, assuredly, rewarded : he shall be satisfied within the circle of his family ; whilst his own farm shall gratefully supply him with wholesome and plentiful provision. This was deemed one of the greatest blessings among the people of Israel. The man, who feared the Lord, and walked in his ways, was not only assured, that " his wife should be as the fruitful vine upon the walls of his house, and his children like the olive branches, round about his table ;" but he was promised, as the first and great incentive to goodness, that " he should eat the labors of his own hands."

To perceive these remarkable advantages, doth not require any uncommon penetration. They are so obvious, that they cannot be easily overlooked. Nor is any extraordinary degree of insight necessary, to discover a Providence amid so evident a display of it.

One should naturally conclude, therefore, that the husbandman must be eminently religious. Whilst his situation is not only advantageous, as opposed to that of the citizen, but as a middle state, exactly suited to the wish of Hagar—" give me neither riches nor poverty, but feed me with

" food

“ food convenient for me ;” his immediate connexion with the God of nature is, surely, a circumstance decisively in his favor.

HAPPY, indeed, husbandmen, would ye be, were ye but sensible of your own happiness ! For, then would ye be conspicuously religious : and your religion would shew forth your gratitude to God, and your benevolence to man.

Influenced by gratitude, ye would give continual thanks to your heavenly Benefactor. Ye would remember Him, in your bed, “ where the sleep of the laborer is sweet ;” and “ ye would think upon Him, when ye were waking”—whether ye went forth to your labor, or were returning from the field. To your lively perceptions of His presence, “ the outgoings of the morning and the evening” would appear, unceasingly, to praise Him ! If the fruits, which you expected to crown your toils, were produced to you in a regular succession, all appearing at their appointed season, ye would see the good effects of your own regularity, in the culture of the ground ; and be the first to acknowledge, that a strict attention to our proper calling, is almost invariably followed by the blessings of

Heaven.

Heaven. Ye would be sensible, however, of your dependence on God, without whom all your labors were vain ; who hath the power of withdrawing his blessings from you, and who hath, sometimes, frustrated your hopes. If the fruits of the earth should, temporally, fail, ye would not murmur at Providence; but remember the blessings that are past. Instead of repining, you would reflect, that you deserve nothing at the hands of God—that the best are unprofitable servants—and that, though your merits were ever so transcendent, the present life is not the scene of retribution. You would consider that the temporal interests of mankind are so blended, as necessarily to involve the good in the same calamity with the wicked ; and that, as God sendeth rain both on the just and on the unjust, he also afflicteth them alike with drought or with famine. You would be aware, that, if prosperity flowed in one unbroken current, even the worthiest would become arrogant and vain, and quickly transgress a command which every Christian should remember : “ Be not high-minded, “ but fear.” Familiarized to these meditations, ye would banish disquietude from your bosoms,

even

even though more than partial losses should befall you. Though the "fig-tree should not blossom, " or fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive should fail, and the fields should yield no meat; the flock be cut off from the fold, and no herd remain in the stalls; yet would ye still rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of your salvation."

This religious gratitude would produce in your temper an habitual piety, that would be manifested to all. Ye would not only give thanks to God, in secret; but regularly attend his service at the period of public worship—at that solemn period, when the whole Christian world, pausing from labor and from care, fall down before the throne of the most High! The sabbath would be peculiarly endeared to you; as the day, when you might join the congregation of the Lord, in praises appropriated to the circumstances of your condition. For then would you be delighted with the sacred history, that records the transactions of husbandmen, and their piety towards God. You would there remark that variety of allusions to your employment, and those images drawn from the rustic life, which give the scriptures so charming

ing a simplicity. You would be struck with the descriptions and thanksgivings in the psalms of David, that hold forth your innocent delights to observation and echo the sentiments and feelings of your hearts. If you there contemplated the goodness of God, you would find him " visiting the " earth, and blessing it, and making it very plen- " teous :" if, his particular Providence, you would behold him " leading forth his own people, like " sheep :" if, his concern for all his creatures, you would see him " giving fodder unto the cattle, " and feeding the young ravens that call upon " him :" if, his power, " the beasts of the forest " are his ; it is he who setteth fast the mountains, " and shaketh the wilderness of Cades." If you there saw man represented, you would mark his going forth unto his work, and " to his labor, until " the evening :" if, a religious man, you would survey him " like a green olive-tree in the house " of God ;" or " like a tree planted by the water- " side, which will bring forth its fruit in due " season :" if, the days of man, you would be told " that they are but grass ; and that he flourisheth, " as a flower of the field."

Amidst your devotional sacrifices, you would feel a sense of the Divine presence, that could only be more deeply imprest by a visible manifestation of his glory. And, remembering that the prayer of a righteous man availeth much, ye would not distrust (as is too frequently the case) the efficacy of occasional petitions. You would recollect, that " when Elijah (who was a man of like passions as we are) " prayed earnestly that it might not rain, " it rained not on the earth, by the space of three " years and six months." And that " when he " prayed again, the Heaven gave rain, and the earth " brought forth her fruit." You would, however, be sensible, that no prayers can be efficacious, but through the merits of him " who was led like a " lamb to the slaughter, and who was harmless as " a sheep before her shearers," when he was sacrificed for your sins. To approach your God through Jesus, would be a perpetual source of comfort to your humble minds. In short, you would be gratified in the temple of God, by a flow of pleasure, increasing more and more. You would welcome, with sincerest joy, every return of the sabbath ; and, in the mean time, the duties of

of your station, invested with a sanctity before undiscovered to you, would appear like the actual services of religion.

Nor, as benevolence to man is inseparable from gratitude to God, would ye be less distinguished for doing good to all around you. Supported by the hand of Providence, ye would imitate your heavenly Father, in your affection to your earthly friends. Cherished by his bounties, ye would endeavour to resemble him in your liberal distributions. What you thus received as the free gifts of God, you could not possibly hoard up, avariciously, or dissipate in the selfish indulgence of your appetites. In your commerce with one another, you would be necessarily open and generous ; nor, whilst "simplicity and godly sincerity" distinguished your conversation," would any action excite in you a greater abhorrence, than an attempt to over-reach a neighbour.

As a proof of your gratitude to God for all the good things he bestows on you, ye would set apart for his ministers what is their due, with punctuality and clearfulness. And you would tremble at the iniquity of those who defraud their pastor, lest God withhold from them his blessings, for ever. You

would be regular in paying the laborer his hire ;  
and in supplying the necessities of the needy.

Nor, in disposing of your cattle or your corn,  
would ye, any ways, over-rate them ; lest the poor  
should be involved in distress through your un-  
reasonable exactions. Much rather would “ your  
“ righteousness be as clear as the light—your just  
“ dealing as the noonday.” And your charity  
would be your “ mind’s calm sunshine ;” while ye  
“ received the blessing of them who were ready  
“ to perish, and caused the widow’s heart to sing  
“ for joy.”

Your benevolent disposition, in short, would  
render you active and animated in the performance  
of all the social duties.

Meanwhile, your humanity would extend to  
every animal in subjection to you. Ye would be  
gentle to the cattle that so powerfully assist you in  
the cultivation of the soil : and ye would allow  
them, on the sabbath day, that suspension from  
labor which they may reasonably claim.

’Tis seldom, indeed, that the most uncourteous  
rustic imposes a greater burthen on his beasts than  
they are able to bear. But he acts from the sordid  
principle of self-interest. Your’s would be a  
nobler

nobler motive, independent of all selfish considerations. "The merciful man is merciful to his "beast."

Such, in every way, would be the blessed effects of genuine religion. Thus happy would ye be, if ye but knew your own happiness. Few, indeed, are feelingly sensible of the blessings that are rendered common through long possession—that were, possibly, familiar to them, before their minds had acquired the power of reflexion. But ye are, of all men, most inexcusable, if ye prove ungrateful to your God, or uncharitable to your fellow-creatures.

Endeavour, therefore, to keep up in your minds a lively sense of the blessings you enjoy: which can only be done by frequent meditation.

Hence your peculiar duties will result in all their strength—will appear to you distinct and luminous. Hence your gratitude and benevolence will become habitually delightful; and you will go on, with ease and satisfaction, in that enlightened path which the Almighty hath traced out for his children.

In this path ye will walk, without danger of wandering, as long as ye have trust in God; and  
be

be assured, it will bring you "beside the waters  
 " of comfort. "And though it must terminate in  
 " the valley of the shadow of death, yet fear no  
 " evil; for the Lord Jehovah will protect you."  
 " Fear not, little flock, for he is faithful who  
 " hath promised." "And may the God of Peace,  
 " that brought again from the dead our Lord  
 " Jesus Christ—that great Shepherd of the sheep,  
 " through the blood of the everlasting covenant,  
 " make you perfect in every good work." "So,  
 " when that Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive  
 " a crown of glory which fadeth not away!"

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



s  
n  
o  
s  
d  
a  
e  
a